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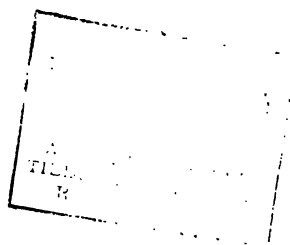
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ABC



N. 2

1898





"Miss McGoy played the parlor organ, and Almanzar sang, the short, black young man and the slim, 'bright' young man unenthusiastically acting as audience."

ALMANZAR

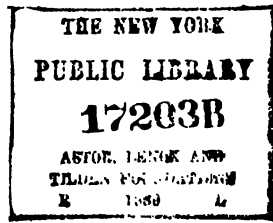
BY

J. FRANK DAVIS

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TO
C. F. D. D.

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EPISODE I

WHITE FOLKS' TALK

MR. FARNSWORTH looked up from his morning newspaper, across to where his wife was pouring his second cup of coffee.

"Here's something that might explain why Aunt Carrie didn't get that birthday present we sent," he remarked. "It's a despatch under a Chicago date."

The swing door into the little butler's pantry that joined dining room and kitchen opened at this second, and Almanzar Evarts came briskly in with another plate of crisp toast. Mr. Farnsworth read on, paying no attention to the servant, who soft-footedly went about his business in the dining room, passing the cup that Mrs. Farnsworth had refilled, shifting a window shade, putting another piece of post-oak on the open fire.

Almanzar's ears caught the word "negro" early in the recital. After that, they remained open and attentive, although his eyes never once left the tasks on which he was engaged. Mr. and Mrs. Farnsworth not only did not notice that the colored boy was listening; they did not even consider the fact that he was in the room.

This was the news despatch the head of the house read aloud:

One policeman was killed, another wounded and two members of the organization lost their lives during a raid this evening on a gang which has been systematically robbing the mails passing through this city. The robberies were committed through the connivance of a trusted negro porter employed in the postoffice, who was working in connection with a coterie of thieves led by Michael Bostock, alias Micky Boss, a man with a long criminal record. Bostock and an unidentified member of his gang were killed in the fight. Two others escaped, including the negro, who is said to have fired at least one of the shots that killed and wounded the officers. A general alarm has been sent out for their arrest. William Wells, the white man wanted, is about thirty-five years old, five feet seven inches tall, has a broken nose, and an old bullet scar on the right thigh. Henry Moore, the negro, is twenty-nine years old, five feet nine inches in height and well-proportioned. He is a mulatto, and is described as having a deep nick in the rim of his left ear, acquired several years ago in a razor duel.

As Mr. Farnsworth dropped the paper and reached for his coffee, Almanzar slid silently into the pantry and thence into the kitchen. He heard no more of the conversation, which, indeed, would not have interested

7 7 7 7

him, being devoted principally to Aunt Carrie's strayed gift, and the moral of sending valuable parcels by registered mail.

Almanzar, softly humming a hymn as he washed the breakfast dishes and began preparations for luncheon, let his mind dwell cheerfully on the details of the fight which he had just heard described. He filled in the missing parts to his own entire satisfaction. He visualized without difficulty the arrival of the police, their demands, the gang's defiance, the rush to break into the house, the three white men and the negro, armed with pistols, making their brave stand until their would-be captors were down and two of the criminals were able to escape.

That the despatch had not said whether the raid took place in a dwelling house, a store, a stable, a garage, or the forests that, for all he knew, might grow on the edges of Chicago, did not handicap Almanzar's imagination, which pictured the whole scene. He even saw, in his mind's eye, the .45-caliber Colt revolvers in the hands of all the combatants, because he was a Texas negro and did not suspect that any one ever really used a smaller pistol.

Almanzar was cook and general servant at the Farnsworth house; his official title was "house-boy." He was aged twenty-two, was five feet eleven inches in height, weighed nearly one hundred and eighty pounds, and was several shades off Congo black, with-

out being "bright" enough to be described as a mulatto. He was a popular young man in the set in which he moved, and a power for good when he lifted his voice in song in the choir of the African M. E. Zion Church.

Very strict in his attendance at church was Almanzar. His father was a steward in the African M. E. Zion. His grandfather had been a preacher there in an earlier day. His great-grandfather, still living, at least eighty-five years old and stubbornly expressing his conviction that his age was more than a hundred, boasted the proud distinction of having been an exhorter 'way back befo' the wah, on Colonel Reese Evarts' Louisiana plantation. The youngest of the colored Evartses therefore came naturally by his devotion to such things.

Almanzar mentioned the Chicago despatch when he called on his father and mother that evening, after dinner. He mentioned it at length the following night at a party with dancing given by the parents of Miss Derisette Boody. He continued to mention it, the more willingly because many other darkies were mentioning it, also, and he justifiably felt that he had received the facts more reliably than they. The whole negro quarter of the city was discussing it for four days, in that undercurrent of gossip which spreads news like wireless among a people that does not read newspapers. During that time it is probable not a

colored man or woman in all the city spoke of the matter to a white person.

Then, after four days, a gentleman of color fifteen hundred miles nearer than Chicago—right there at home, in fact—becoming consumed with jealousy over the philanderings of his fiancée, spent a month's savings on two quarts of ice cream, which he sent to her anonymously after clumsily mixing therein a modicum of rat poison. The poison remained principally at the top, the fiancée's little sister opened the package and began to gorge herself without waiting for the lady to arrive home, and the little sister was buried on the following day, with white plumes on the hearse and more than six hacks.

Although not a colored person could be found to admit to the police that he or she had ever even heard any man's name mentioned in connection with the family thus rudely broken, the detectives arrested the right man for homicide, and everybody forgot that nick-eared Henry Moore of Chicago, who had defied the white policemen and fought his way to freedom.

Almanzar, as one who had heard the Chicago matter discussed by his white folks, had enjoyed unusual prominence and authority while that was the principal topic, but he did not know the rat poison man, or his near-murdered fiancée, or the fiancée's greedy little sister, even by sight. Therefore, socially, he slipped into the background.

This irked him somewhat, but he was more irked about this time, by a certain wandering attention on the part of Miss Derisette Boody, whom he had come recently—although no formal engagement had been announced—to regard as his best girl. It had been his custom for some weeks to spend many of his evenings with Derisette. Twice of late he had found her absent from home, and her mother's explanation had not sounded entirely reasonable.

On Thursday evening, therefore, by wheedling Mr. Farnsworth with a story about a sick aunt—which she did not believe and he did not really expect her to believe—he was able to leave the house early, his dinner dishes, except the silver, being postponed to the early morning. On Thursday was choir rehearsal. If he had not been able to get off early he would have had to go directly to the church, and could not have called on Derisette.

It was one of the crosses of Almanzar's life that Derisette, being a Baptist, could not go with him to choir rehearsals, or hear him vocalize the fruit thereof on Sundays in the A. M. E. Zion auditorium.

Derisette was at home, and all dressed up. She exhibited some surprise at seeing him.

"Wheah you-all goin'?" he asked, suspiciously.

"Nowheah. How come you get eroun' tonight 'Manzar? Ain't it choir rehearsal?"

"Yas. I'm on my way. I jes' come eroun' to as

ef you wouldn' like t' go to the theayter, Sat'day night."

"*What* theayter?" Derisette was not usually so particular.

"Any one." Almanzar was no piker. "They's two shows oughta be both good. Vawdaville at the Majesty, an' a show at the Santex that oughta be awful nice, I should think f'om the name. It's call' 'The Doll's House.' Soun's lak they'd be good music an' dancin' in it."

The lady hesitated surprisingly. "Kain't you come eroun' tomorrow?" she asked. "I kain't sho'ly say jes' thisyer minute."

"How come you kain't?" As she still hesitated, he repeated the question insistently. "How *come* you kain't?"

"'Cause I natchully kain't tell so fah ahaid. Lawdy, 'Manzar! You growlin' lak a ol' beah! Have they set choir rehearsal latah oveh to yo' chuhch?"

Almanzar glanced hastily at the clock on the mantel, saw he had barely time to reach the rehearsal, and put on his hat. His thoughts were a bit confused. Derisette's evening finery again registered itself on his mind.

"What you all dressed up fuh tonight?" he asked. "Expectin' comp'ny, or goin' anywheah?"

"Don' talk foolish!" the girl laughed. "I'm fixin' to stay right yere in the house. An' I don' expect

anybody's comin'. Ef you don' hurry, you'll sho'ly get call' down by the rev'ren'."

Almanzar hurried.

Music! How it soothes the soul! How it eases man's longings and lifts him out of himself! What balm for the troubled mind comes with the opportunity to gaze heavenward and sing! Before the evening was past the choir-master had twice complimented Almanzar, and even the rev'ren' had grumbled a few polysyllabic words of praise.

Almanzar set out for home, on the opposite side of the city, in a softened, happy mood.

It was a mild December night, and he sauntered. His way lay through that portion of East Commerce street given over to the commercial pursuits and entertainment of colored people. He drifted along, nodding or speaking to occasional acquaintances, looking into show windows, humming to himself the solo that he knew would uplift and thrill the whole A. M. E. Zion congregation on the coming Sunday.

At a certain corner he met Breckenridge Clark, the negro policeman on the beat, walking eastward with Paul Morris, the colored detective. Three blocks farther on, he came across a friend of about his own age, gazing raptly into a store window. In the very center of the window, tightly fitting a dummy, was a pinched-back suit of a most ravishing shade of blue. The sign that labeled it read:

*The Latest Thing in Tailored Clothes
for Swell Dressers. \$17.58*

Almanzar lined up beside his friend, while they expressed joint admiration.

"I be'n thinkin' of gettin' me a soot something like that," Almanzar boasted. "I wouldn't get it heah, though. I usually trade at white folks' stores."

"Eveh get any clo's at Radway an' Dunne's?" the other asked.

Almanzar never had, Radway & Dunne's being the city's largest men's tailoring establishment, with a ready-made department but no arrangements whatever for negro instalment accounts, but he lied glibly. "Two three," he said. "Mista' Fahnswo'th—he's my white folks—fixes it fuh me."

The other boy was consumed with envy. Envy breeds malice.

"How come you ain' goin' Miss Derisette Boody no mo'?" he asked.

"What you mean I ain' goin' Miss Boody?"

"'Cause you ain't, is you? 'Cause 'at new No'the'n niggah goin' with huh, ain't he?"

Almanzar forgot the beautiful blue clothes.

"What new No'the'n niggah?" he demanded. "You tryin' kid me, 'Fonzo?"

"No, I ain' tryin' kid you. I mean 'at bright fella, come int' town 'bout three fo' days ago. I s'posed

you'd heard erbout him. Mighty biggetty, *I* say. Hol's his haid up mighty high, b'lieve me! But 'em ladies—Lawdy!”

“Looky heah, 'Fonzo! You tell *me!*” The smaller youth quailed before the concentrated wrath in Almanzar's voice, and wished he had not opened the subject. “*When* you see 'at new niggah an' Miss Boody?”

“Monday night. Night 'fo' last. Tonight.”

“You say you *did?* Tonight!”

“Sho'ly. I see 'em goin' in Gaines' Palace Theater not much ovah a houh ago. I see 'em——”

He was talking to empty air. Almanzar was hurrying to cover the block between there and Gaines' Palace Theater.

The arcs before the theater, a picture house for negroes only, stabbed the street's darkness with a blotch of garish light. The tinkle of a mechanical piano filtered out through its open door. In a little ticket-selling booth was wedged a very black, very fat, middle-aged woman, whose appearance gave the impression that carpenters might have to be summoned to get her out. On either side of the entrance were lurid three-sheet posters, showing the pictures on exhibition to be the thrillingest of thrillers.

Almanzar Evarts was not thinking of the three-sheet posters, or of the show at all. He was getting as quickly as possible to a place where he could see the

entire audience as it should come out at eleven o'clock, after the last show. The only thought that came to him beyond this was the bitter one that he had asked Derisette to go with him to the leading white folks' theaters of the city, and she had staved him off until she could consult with a new flame who took her only to a colored house.

He did not consider the psychology of the situation, which was that a Northern negro might rather go to a colored folks' theater in which he could sit wherever he pleased, than to a show-house where only the gallery was open to him. Nor did Almanzar realize—not knowing the personality of this stranger from the North—that perhaps the new arrival had grounds for desiring to limit his comings and goings to that part of the city given over principally to people of his own color.

Almanzar's ideas of "the North" were vague, anyway. To his mind, Dallas—three hundred miles—was a great distance off. He rather thought "Yankees" came from just back of there.

A fussy-looking colored man came out of the theater and threw open all the exits, by which token Almanzar knew the final picture of the evening was approaching its last thrill. The mountainous woman in the ticket office backed out without wrecking it. The man and she, together, pushed the ticket office to one side, and stacked against the walls the easels with their an-

nouncements for the following week that had blocked the little lobby.

Almanzar sidled up to a point on the curbstone almost exactly in front of the central door. He satisfied himself, by earnest scrutiny in the direction from which he had come, that neither Policeman Clark nor Detective Morris were in sight. Not a silver badge glistened in either direction.

There was a hum and murmur from within, and through the exits trooped the people. They were laughing, shouting, grinning, snickering, calling happily to one another. About half the audience had come out when Miss Derisette Boody appeared.

She was holding tightly to her companion's arm. Almanzar noted, first, that she was looking up into his face and laughing her merriest; second, as her voice came to him, that she was talking with the most correct precision of which she was capable; third, with relief, that the man, who was an over-dressed, straight-nosed mulatto of the shade known among colored people themselves as "bright," was an inch or two shorter than himself and fully twenty pounds lighter.

By the time he had taken in these things, he was at their side. He wasted no time; Policeman Clark or Detective Morris might come back any minute. Sometimes white policemen strolled down this way at about this hour, too.

"Interjuce me to you' frien', Miss Derisette," he said.

The girl caught her breath and looked frightened; then she decided to brazen it out.

"Mista' Mosher, meet mah frien' Mista' Evarts," she said. The new negro grinned. "How de do, Misto' Evarts," he said, in a distinctly Northern dialect. "I'm delighted to make yo' acquaintance."

Almanzar, having gathered more and more indignation while he waited, could not maintain any fiction of politeness.

"Niggah!" he said, authoritatively, "you got my lady! Run erlong about yo' business!"

"Say!" Mr. Mosher grinned, addressing Derisette. "Yo' friend is a good-lookin' young fella, but he ain't excessively super-pervided with polite manners. Ef you'll be so kind en' condescendin' as to excuse us," he went on, to Almanzar, "we'll be on ouah way. Misto' Evarts, good *night!*"

"Stan' wheh you is, niggah!" cried Almanzar. "You ain' goin' take this lady home, 'cause *I* is."

The new man pushed Derisette to one side.

"You're bigger'n me," he said, to Almanzar, "but when they're bigger'n me I cut 'em down to my size."

He kicked up his foot and went into his low shoe for a razor. As he did, Almanzar struck him. It was

a sidewise, glancing blow, because the crowd hemmed them in, and it only upset Mr. Mosher's balance and knocked off his stylish, flat-brimmed hat.

The light man straightened up with an ugly roar and swung back the razor, getting its blade clenched across the palm of his hand. But he did not use it. Almanzar, with one choking cry, pushed aside the people that were in his way—they were all hurrying, too—and fled at top speed.

He might get into a little ruckus with a fresh newcomer over a girl, but he couldn't see himself fighting a desperate murderer. As Mr. Mosher's hat fell off, Almanzar's eyes had observed a deep nick in the rim of his left ear.

There was shouting behind him. He thought the Chicago negro was chasing him. He did not look back. Panic-stricken, he ran like the wind.

A policeman, hearing the sound of pounding feet and seeing a darky coming as if pursued by ghosts, stepped into a shadowy doorway, whence he leaped, tackling like a football guard. This completed Almanzar's collapse. He could only chatter incoherently when the policeman demanded to know where he had come from and why he was running. He had been in the police station more than an hour, in fact, before he recovered his powers of speech. Then, to official inquiries, he merely said he hadn't been anywhere and hadn't done anything. He was running to get a car.

He stuck to this in the face of cross-examination and even threats.

At quarter of seven the following morning Mrs. Farnsworth awakened and was impressed by the absence of all sound in the kitchen. She investigated. A few moments later she was shaking her husband.

"You'll have to get up, Fred. Almanzar isn't here."

"Isn't where?" he asked, sleepily.

"Anywhere about the place. I've been out and knocked on the door of his house, and I don't get any answer. He didn't come home last night."

Mr. Farnsworth sat up and rubbed his eyes. "Don't bother to get any breakfast more than a cup of coffee, as far as I'm concerned," he said. "I'll get something to eat downtown, and you can take your time."

"But what do you suppose has happened to that boy? He's never been away a night without permission since he worked for us."

"Pinched, probably. It isn't likely he's sick or hurt. I'll call up the station. If he isn't there we'll tackle the hospitals. Gee, I wish he'd taken some other day to do it! I'm going to be mighty busy this forenoon."

As soon as he was shaved and dressed, Mr. Farnsworth got police headquarters on the telephone.

"You got a colored boy in there named Almanzar?" he asked, when the sergeant on duty answered.

"What's his last name?"

"Why—er—wait a minute—oh, Evarts."

There was a pause while the sergeant consulted the blotter. "Yes, sir, he's here," came the reply.

"Taken in at eleven-six."

"What's the charge?"

"It isn't made, yet. Waitin' for the chief to come down."

"What did he do?"

"I don't know. Didn't kill nobody, I reckon."

"Court comes in at eight o'clock, doesn't it?"

"Yes, sir. Eight sharp. Want this boy held back until you can get here?"

"If you please. Tell the chief, will you, that I'm coming right down. Farnsworth is the name—Fredderick Farnsworth."

The sergeant evidently recognized it. "Certainly, Mr. Farnsworth," he said. "I'll tell him the minute he comes in."

Mr. Farnsworth sat in the chief's office, still breakfastless, a half-hour later. The policeman who made the arrest had just arrived, sleepy and ill-natured.

"Along about nine o'clock," the officer said, "we got that general call to look out for some niggahs that had broken into a house out on San Sebastian avenue, and orders were to take in any black boys that couldn't account for themselves. At a little after eleven, I'm on Commerce street, when I see this niggah runnin'.

He was sho'ly scared of something. I grabbed him, and he tried to thresh around and get away, and he wouldn't say where he'd been or what he'd been up to. So I taken him in." The officer looked half-defiantly at Mr. Farnsworth. "There kain't *no* niggahs run like that on *my* beat!" he declared.

"Have you any reason to think this boy was mixed up in that burglary?" Mr. Farnsworth asked the chief. "I'm pretty sure he isn't that kind. He's worked for me a good while."

"No," the chief replied. "We got those breakin' an enterin' niggahs, all of 'em, later in the night, and they confessed. I don't know what I ought to put against this boy of yours. He probably did something, or he wouldn't be running that way, but I'll admit I don't know what. I was going to vag him on general principles."

Vagrancy, the all-embracing refuge of a policeman in doubt, means three to six months on the rock pile.

"Of course, under the circumstances, if you want to appear before the judge for him, we won't push the case," the chief added.

"Let me go down and see the boy before he's arraigned. Can I?"

"Surely." The chief called an officer. "Take Mr. Farnsworth downstairs and let him talk to a black boy named Evarts—that big nigger that was brought

in just before midnight. Come in and let me know what you find out, will you, suh?"

Keys turned, doors opened, a rare conglomeration of smells assailed Mr. Farnsworth's nostrils and upset his empty stomach, and he found himself at a foot-square grating in the door of the general detention room—technically known as "the pen."

Some one shouted: "Oh, you, Evarts! Get a move on, niggah!" Almanzar, his complexion several shades lighter than normal by reason of fright, came to the grating and peered through. The warder went away out of hearing.

"What have you been doing?" was Mr. Farnsworth's stern inquiry.

"Nothin'." Almanzar's voice was scared and shaky, but his demeanor was that of immaculate and injured innocence. "I was jes' runnin' to get my car, an' policeman jump out an' grab me."

"Where?"

"Commerce street."

"You don't get a car for our house on Commerce street."

A pause. "I was goin' run thoo to Houston when I got up a ways."

"Where had you been running from?"

"Jes' down the street."

"But why? Come on, Almanzar, you've got to

tell me if you want to get out. Why were you running?"

"To get a car."

"See here!" Mr. Farnsworth spoke calmly, but emphatically. "I know better than that, and if you don't want to go on the rock pile you've got to tell me. I can't save you this time if you don't tell me."

"Yassuh. . . . Man hit me."

"Where?"

"Front of a pitcher show."

"What picture show?"

"Cullud pitcher show."

"Who was he?"

"I don' *know*, suh. I nev' see him befo'."

"Why did he hit you?"

"I don' *know*, suh. I guess he mus' er take me fuh somebody else. He jes' hit me. So I don' want to fight, en' he's bigger'n me, so I run. An' policeman *jump* out an' grab me."

"What were you fighting with him about?"

"No, suh. I *wasn't* fightin'. I jes' come erlong an' was goin' by the pitcher show, an' fella come an' hit me. I nev' saw him befo' in all my life."

"You'd been to the picture show?"

"No, *suh*! I'd be'n choir rehearsal."

"Can you prove it?"

Almanzar considered this. "No, suh," he candidly

admitted. "I jes' natchully kain't. Ain' no white folks see me. Ain' no white folks *theah*."

Mr. Farnsworth returned to the subject of the alleged unprovoked assault.

"What kind of looking man was he—the man that hit you?"

"Big, tall boy," Almanzar said, speaking slowly and thoughtfully, as though taking no risk of descriptive error. "Erbout six feet, I expec'. Lots bigger'n me."

"Black or light?"

"Black. Yassuh. Ve'y black man. Wide, flat nose. Had er cap on."

"And I suppose you were fighting about some girl—that's your pet amusement."

"No, suh. I di'n' even *know* 'at man. An' policeman jump——"

"All right. I'll see what I can do." Mr. Farnsworth turned away.

"Mista' Fahnswo'th."

"Yes."

"Ef you please, suh, will you please see 'at cullud lawyer 'at telafoamed fuh you, an' tell him you've come?"

"Nobody telephoned for me. I called up the station myself."

"Yassuh. I give my money to Mista' Clodden, 'at cullud lawyer, to telafoam you an' get me off."

"How much money?"

"Dollah an' fifteen cents. All I had. He said he'd telafoam you, an' then he'd 'pear foh me in cote."

"Well, I'll get it back mighty quick! Why, the——"

"Mista' Fahnswo'th, please, suh! Please don' you go to both'in' with it. I'll see him myself afteh I git out. Don' you say nothin' to him erbout it, please, suh."

"But the scoundrel robbed you of——"

"Yassuh. I'll see him erbout it, please, suh. *You* don' want to be both'in' with cullud folks' foolishness. *I'll* get it back."

"You know blame' well you can't."

"No, suh. Yassuh. Anyway, I want you please to let me do it. Please, suh!"

Mr. Farnsworth went back to the chief's office without answering. To the chief he said: "He had a fight with a big black boy that he says he doesn't know, at a colored moving picture theater."

"They *never* know 'em," laughed the chief. "I thought it was about as serious as that. I'll have him arraigned right away, and you can speak to the judge. I'll tell him we don't care to push the case."

"Before that, chief, there's a nigger lawyer somewhere around here named Clodden that took all the money he had in his clothes, and——"

"Clodden usually does," interrupted the chief. "You can't do a thing. He is a regular member of the bar, and he talks 'em into it for legal services. At that, they get a run for their money. He appears and argues for 'em."

"Does he ever get one off?"

"Maybe. I didn't happen to be present." He rose. "They'll be bringing your boy up now; we'll go into the court room."

The official proceedings took perhaps a minute. The name Almanzar Evarts was called, and the clerk told him he was accused of vagrancy, being an idle person.

"We have no evidence to put in," said the chief.

"This boy has worked for me three years and is a good——" was as far as Mr. Farnsworth got when the judge said:

"If he's worked for you three years, Mr. Farnsworth, he's certainly not a vagrant. Don't you do anything else, black boy, or next time I'll send you up for three months! Discharged."

Lawyer Clodden stood discreetly to one side, and neither he nor Almanzar spoke to one another, or gave any sign they had ever met.

On the sidewalk in front of the City Hall Mr. Farnsworth gave Almanzar a nickel.

"Here's your carfare," he said, shortly. "You get home as quick as the Lord'll let you, and get a bath, and send that suit of clothes you've got on to a clean-

er's, and get into the house and do your last night's dinner dishes. And, see here! This is the last time! The next time you get to fighting and the police arrest you, I won't come down."

"Yassuh," said Almanzar, cheerfully.

At his office Mr. Farnsworth found he had already missed one important appointment, and a man was waiting to keep another. He was too busy all the forenoon to get out for any breakfast. Although he tried to eat lunch, his appetite was gone. At two o'clock in the afternoon he finished the vital matters of the day, closed his rolltop with a slam that made him wince, and went home with the worst sick headache he had had in a year. The one thing that usually would relieve his headaches was an hour or two of sleep.

He knew his wife would not be there; she had spoken the evening before of a luncheon engagement and an afternoon party that would keep her out until dinner time; there had been talk this morning of her having to break the engagements if the day's developments should leave her servantless. He let himself into the front door with his latchkey, and went at once into the den at the back of the bungalow, where he stretched himself upon a couch and in a half-hour or so dropped off to sleep.

There was neither sight nor sound of Almanzar. The servant, he presumed, was out in his house in the yard.

At about five o'clock Mr. Farnsworth was awakened by voices. An open window of the den overlooked the back gallery, where Almanzar was sitting engaged in some domestic task. At least two other negroes had come to call upon him, with a view, probably, to getting the details of the late unpleasantness.

Mr. Farnsworth thought he would tell them to stop talking, but before he had awakened sufficiently to do this he caught the drift of the conversation, and remained quiet. The darkies, not knowing any white person was within hearing, were gossiping freely. Almanzar, as one who had been in the pen and promptly got out, was for the moment a distinguished character.

The beginning of the story had evidently already been told. What Mr. Farnsworth heard was:

"So I says to him, I says, 'Niggah, you got my lady!' An' straightway we gets ready to mix. An' when he goes afteh his razzer, I clouts him one on the side of his haid, an' then's how come I see his lef' ear."

"What name did Miss Boody interjuce him as?" one of the visitors asked.

"Mosher. 'At ain't much diff'ent f'om Moore. So when I see he's 'at nick-eared *bad* niggah f'om Chicago, I natchully says, 'Mista' Moore-Mosher, I'm on my way.' I nev' did know what 'come of *him*. I thought he done chase' me, but I nev' look eroun'.

An' 'en 'at policeman *jump* out 'en get me, an' put me in the pen."

A third voice spoke: "You di'n' *tell* 'at policeman, did you, 'Manzar?"

"Nossuh," replied Almanzar, positively. "Di'n' tell nobody *nothin'*. Nossuh. I jes' says I'm runnin' fuh car, an' lets it go at 'at."

The first visitor commented, meditatively:

"*Won't* 'at Miss Derisette Boody get pernicketty when she fin's out who 'at bright man is? I don't guess, 'Manzar, she'll have anything tuh do wif common cullud folks fuh long time."

"I should worry!" Almanzar said, airily. "I goin' get me a *new* girl. 'At Miss Derisette she done stub huh toe with me."

Mr. Farnsworth lay very still. After a time, Almanzar went out into his house and the other boys went away. Without the servant ever suspecting that he had been in the house at all, Mr. Farnsworth slipped quietly out of the front door and took a car downtown.

Before six o'clock he and the chief of police were in executive session. Late that evening, as the fascinating mulatto was leaving the home of Miss Boody, he found himself rudely seized by four large and violent men, who gave him no chance whatever to draw a weapon ere they handcuffed him. The next morning's newspapers contained the information that Henry

Moore, alias Harrison Mosher (negro), had been arrested for murder and was being held pending the arrival of officers with requisition papers from the governor of Illinois.

No less than four colored youths called on Almanzar that forenoon, dug their shoes into the dirt of the back yard and conversed in low voices, aimlessly. Almanzar made two brief visits to the back yards of neighbors, making errands with other houseboys. The underground wireless was in full operation.

During luncheon, Mrs. Farnsworth (her husband always lunched downtown) said to the servant, without emphasis:

"Did you hear the police got that bad colored boy from Chicago?"

Almanzar looked blank. "You say they *did*? What boy was 'at, please, Miz Fahnswo'th?"

"His name was Moore—Henry Moore. Did you know him?"

"Henry Moore." He repeated the name speculatively. "I don' guess I evah know 'at boy, Miz Fahnswo'th."

"You heard about a colored boy shooting a policeman up in Chicago, didn't you?"

"Policeman? No, *m'am*. I nev' heah nothin' erbout 'at er-tall." He drifted into the kitchen.

Mr. Farnsworth came home early to dinner, and

jubilantly told the story of his day's experiences to his wife.

"And the reward will be paid to me next week," he concluded. "Five hundred dollars. Now what shall I do for Almanzar? It seems like I ought to give him a good piece of it—a hundred or two, anyway."

"Gracious!" exclaimed Mrs. Farnsworth. "Don't! I've been three years training that boy into a good servant. Do you want to absolutely ruin him in one fell swoop? He wouldn't work for six months, and by that time he'd be one of these trifling bad boys."

"I know," agreed her husband. "It would be no favor to him. . . . I could put some of the money in a separate savings bank account, without saying anything to him about it, and make him a present of the interest."

"That sounds better. Anything so you don't completely spoil him."

Mr. Farnsworth pondered. "Even that doesn't seem quite fair," he said. "He ought to have something right now. Suppose we buy him a big Christmas present."

"Well," she conceded. "Don't go too far. It is awfully easy to undo a lot of good work."

Mr. Farnsworth broached the matter to Almanzar when the servant came in to get his own portion of the dessert and the coffee cups.

"Almanzar," he said, "Monday is Christmas."

"Yassuh." Almanzar exhibited nearly twenty-eight teeth.

"If you had the biggest present you could hope to get, what would it be?"

This sounded like a white folks' joke, but one might as well answer it truthfully. "Suit of pinch-back clo's, *of* navy blue suhge," he replied, promptly.

"What else?"

It *was* a jest, as he had suspected. However, there is no harm in wishing. He draped himself against the door frame and entered amiably into the spirit of the game.

"Hat," he said. "Peahl gray hat with white band *an'* white bindin' eroun' the rim. *An'* tan shoes with white tops. *An'* er shirt—with pu'ple stripes. *An'* er paih pu'ple socks."

"You'd need a purple necktie too, wouldn't you?" Mrs. Farnsworth asked.

"Yassum. *An'* a pu'ple necktie," he agreed.

"You'd buy them down at some place where you colored people trade, I suppose," Mr. Farnsworth said.

Almanzar thought he might as well wish the whole business while he was about it. The place whence it should come was no more extravagant a wish than the wardrobe.

"Ef I had a Chris'mus present like 'at, I'd go get 'em at Radway an' Dunne's."

Both Mr. and Mrs. Farnsworth were smiling in his direction.

"All right," said Mr. Farnsworth. "You get your dinner dishes done, and I'll give you a note to Mr. Radway. Mrs. Farnsworth and I are going to give you all those things for Christmas. You can go down and pick them out yourself, tonight. And you can make it two shirts and four pairs of socks."

Almanzar reeled toward the kitchen. Mrs. Farnsworth's voice followed him.

"If you break a single dish, I'll come out to you, and you'll wish you hadn't!"

"Yassum," he replied, mechanically, setting his own plate of ice cream in the oven and opening the door of the refrigerator preparatory to putting the coffee pot therein. Observing that this did not seem to be exactly right, he changed his mind and set the hot coffee pot on the floor just in front of the family's highly indignant Spitz dog, which was waiting for its supper.

Never had Almanzar's singing been so uplifting as on the following morning. With eyes fixed heavenward, to the delight and inspiration of a great company, he feelingly sang a special piece of music whose refrain was:

*Let me evah vir-chu-ous be,
Lovin' truth an' hon-es-tee,
Walk the straight an' narrow way,
Eve'y day, eve'y day!*

The entire congregation could see the navy blue serge suit, of ultra stylish cut, the purple-striped shirt, the purple tie. Almanzar's sole regret, as he sang, was that he could not wear the hat in church, and that the railing of the choir enclosure hid from the assembled multitude the ravishing vision of the white-topped boots and the purple socks.

He sat, radiant, that evening, in the sitting room of his parents' house. Since Saturday morning there had been little talk among colored people of anything except the desperate Chicagoan who had flashed momentarily across their horizon. Almanzar was proud, not only of his new raiment, but of the fact that Mr. Farnsworth seemed to have come into some prominence through the arrest. He saw no connection whatever between the two matters.

Over by the stove, his aged great-grandfather had been listening to the chatter. From time to time he cast rheumy eyes toward Almanzar's gorgeousness.

"See yere, boy!" he suddenly rumbled, during a lull. "W'en you had fight wif 'at niggah 'bout 'at triflin' yallah Derisette, an' you see he got nick' eah, you ain't *tell* anybody? You isn't talkin' culled folkses' business to w'ite folks, is you?"

"No, suh, gran'pa. I isn't say a single wuhd. No, suh. Ain' nothin' but trouble *evah* to be gain' by tellin' white folks *nothin'*. No, *suh!*"

Almanzar's mother spoke:

"Sis' Jackson, down at chuhch thisa mawnin', she says 'at white letteh-carrier, Mista' Jennin's, tol' huh husban' 'at Mista' Fahnswo'th done got a rewahd fuh findin' 'at Henry Moore—much as a hunderd dollahs. What you know about 'at, 'Manzar?"

Almanzar, who had not heard anything about a reward, registered scorn at the idea that anybody could tell him anything he didn't already know about *his* people.

"Jes' white folks' talk," he said.

EPISODE II

A PERFECT DAY

ALMANZAR EVARTS usually lingered in the African M. E. Zion Church after choir rehearsal to gossip with the other singers and receive from them and the choir-master the commendation he had richly earned for the earnestness, quality, and volume of his tenor. On this Thursday evening, however, he hardly waited for the unctuous "That'll be all toenight, ladies an' gen'lemen; please be promp'ly on han' at ten fifty-five Sunday mawnin'," before seizing his stylish pearl-gray hat and making his exit.

"Why you in such a hurry, Brer Evarts?" asked Miss Luna Meecham, coyly. Miss Meecham had thought perhaps Almanzar would see her home; he occasionally did.

"I have a impohtant business engagement," replied Almanzar, in his best imitation of Mr. Farnsworth's manner. "I reely oughta tried to get off f'om comin' to choir rehearsal er-tall."

He passed out through the church door to the street, and set forth at a swinging gait toward one of the more aristocratic colored quarters of the city. Almanzar's important business engagement was a date.

More than one good-looking girl spoke pleasantly to

him or turned her head to follow him with her eyes as he passed. Almanzar was a pleasant figure for the girls to look at upon any occasion. Just now he was more distinguished looking than on ordinary week nights.

He had on a suit of blue serge, a hat of pearl gray, with white band and binding, white-topped shoes of tan, a wonderful fancy shirt and purple socks and neckwear. He usually wore this beautiful combination on Sundays only. From the fact that he was thus attired on this Thursday evening, it could naturally be inferred that some event of unusual importance impended. Events of unusual importance, in Almanzar's life, concerned girls. He was about to make a late call at the home of Miss Susietta McCoy.

Miss McCoy was a recent arrival from Galveston. Had she possessed no social position whatever, her face, figure, charm of manner, good clothes, and quite unusual culture would have made a deep impression on the colored people of her new home. But, plus all these things, she owned an asset that made young women as well as young men smile upon her and strive for her favor. She had come to San Antonio with her father, and her father had come to accept the position of head waiter at the Plaza Hotel.

Lest there still be any who do not see the significance of this, let it be stated that the head waiter of the Plaza Hotel is and for many years has been,

purely by virtue of that position, the undisputed arbiter of San Antonio colored society.

Almanzar had met Miss McCoy only the night before, and had asked the privilege of calling. The young lady having suggested that she would be at home this evening, he had received permission to arrive late. Ordinarily he allowed nothing in the world to interfere with his Thursday evenings, which he dedicated in toto to the choir of the African M. E. Zion Church, but this was different. The young men were already hanging around Miss Susietta like honey-bees around an especially attractive flower. Almanzar was by way of being some honey-bee, himself, and he felt it in his bones that he would have to hurry.

The very desirable Miss McCoy opened the door in person, and welcomed him with a cordiality that visibly displeased two other young men who were sitting in her parents' parlor. There ensued an hour while each of the three tried to outwait the others. During the struggle, Miss McCoy played the parlor organ—she played rather well, having taken music lessons—and Almanzar, without having to be urged unduly, sang.

His natural choice invariably was sacred music, but he sang all kinds. He had a good ear, could follow a score a little by what musicians scornfully call the "rope reading" method, and that evening, leaning over Miss McCoy's shoulder, he learned a new selec-

tion—a solo that seemed almost made for his voice. Susietta had brought the piece with her from Galveston. So engrossed was Almanzar with the new tune, and so pleased at the effect as he reached for the higher notes, that he almost forgot to be indignant at the staying qualities of the short, black young man and the tall, slim, “bright” young man who were unenthusiastically acting as audience.

There was a rule at the Farnsworth house that Almanzar could remain out as late as he pleased, provided only that he slammed the gate and whistled when he came into the yard, so his employers would know he was not a burglar. In this he had a decided advantage over the other young men, who were handicapped by domestic regulations at the houses where they worked.

At quarter-past eleven o'clock the tall, slim, bright young man gave it up with a sigh and said good night. At eleven-thirty the short, black young man also quit, giving Almanzar a look, as he departed, that would have awed a smaller and less irresponsible youth.

Almanzar desired to go not later than eleven-fifty; there were sundry dark and lonely streets on the way to the Farnsworth home that he preferred not to travel on foot and alone, and the last car left downtown at midnight. He wasted no time, therefore, in broaching a subject that had been close to his heart since the previous evening.

"I was wonderin', ez I come by, ef you-all couldn't allow me to esco't you to the festerval at the *big* chuhch, tomorrow night."

"Lawdy, Mista' Evarts! You are the six' gen'leman has ask' me that."

"You ain't accepted `any of 'em?" he asked, anxiously.

"Not enti'ly definitely," she replied. "I wasn't sho' I wanted ter go." Her manner implied that the activities of society bored her. "Is the festervals heah in San 'Ntonio interestin'?"

"Very," Almanzar assured her, with enthusiasm. "Very interestin', indeed! Highly so. I don' remembek any lady eveh goin' to festerval with me 'at didn' say she had er good time befo' the festerval was ovah. I aims ter make festervals pleasant fuh *any* lady goes with *me*."

"I don't guess, f'om you' looks, you spare pains to mek a lady enjoy huhself," Miss McCoy remarked, flatteringly. She was obviously impressed with the prosperity evidenced by his make-up. He hastened to capitalize this apparent affluence. He leaned back in the rocking chair in which he had taken his seat after bidding the last departing guest good night, and spoke with an air:

"Well, when I takes lady to a festerval I don't expect huh not to enjoy huhself. I figures on enjoyin' *myself*—why not the lady, too, that's what *I* says."

Seeing intense approbation of this sentiment in Susietta's face, he amplified with a detail that later he was to realize had been altogether too definite.

"When I takes lady to a festerval," he said, "I *nevah* buys jes' ice cream. Gen'leman 'at ain' able to do more'n buy jes' ice cream ain' got no business to take lady to festerval, way I figure it. If they's san'wiches, I figures we ought have san'wiches. If they's salad, I figures we ought have salad. Besides ice cream *an'* cake. *An'* coffee an' lemolade, if such there be. Friend of mine, only las' week, was tellin' me he was fixin' to take a lady to festerval an' had only fo' bits. I says, 'Stay away, boy; stay away! Go fin' some crap game an' increase yo' income,' I says, 'befo' you expec' lady to get pleas' if you take huh out an' ac' lak a pikah,' I says. An' those is sho'ly my sentiments, Miss McCoy. Either do it or don' do it, but ef you does do it, do it right."

This declaration of principles, which was really quite remarkable, considering that at the moment Almanzar had exactly thirty cents in the world, and a nickel of that must be expended for carfare home, seemed to touch a responsive chord in the young woman's breast. She leaned forward, her eyes glistening.

"I sho'ly appreciates yo' kind invitation, Mista' Evarts," she murmured, "an' it gives me deep pleasure to accep'."

Almanzar also leaned forward, in the rapture of the moment, and a terrifying sound smote him from the rear. At the same instant, something clutched his right shoulder and then let go. His eyes widened with horror at the realization that an accident had befallen his beautiful blue serge coat, an accident, his ears told him, that was not a mere matter of a rip, but a tear.

Even while the girl was exclaiming her regrets, Almanzar, on his feet, had removed the coat and surveyed the damage.

Certain of the McCoy furniture, they being persons of unusual prosperity, had come with them from Galveston. A rocking chair, none other than the one Almanzar had selected to sink into after the short, black young man's departure, had arrived in a somewhat damaged condition. Its back had come loose. The elder McCoy had repaired it, by the simple process of driving a wire nail through. He had not taken thought to get a nail of the right length; in fact, the nail he happened to find when his wife insisted upon the repairs was fully a half inch too long. He used it, and clinched it—in front. The tear across the shoulder of Almanzar's coat was not less than seven inches long.

"Ain' 'at er shame!" Miss McCoy cried. "I'm so sorry! An' it's sho'ly you' bes' coat, too."

Bravely, and without thought of consequences, he

played out the part he had already assumed. To give him his due, for the moment he really believed he was speaking truth; his imagination was as vivid as that of any child.

"Lawdy!" he exclaimed. "Don' let 'at botheh you, Miss McCoy. I done got other clo's besides these. I got *bettah* clo's—comin' tomorrow, f'om my tailor. I don' even have to get this ol' soot mended if I don' want to," he added, as he read admiration for youth, good looks, and riches in her eye. "I'll wear the *new* soot tomorrow night. What time shall I call foh you?"

He wished, as he waited for his car, he had not spoken quite so confidently. He thought of it more and more, as he rode home. He was still considering the matter deeply as he strode into the back yard of the Farnsworth house, slammed the gate, and began to whistle loudly. When he turned on the electric light in his little house, laid his torn coat across his lap, and gave himself up to a cold, calculating analysis of the situation, he was almost convinced that he had been a little foolish.

It was a fact that he had a new suit coming; he almost always had a new suit coming. But it was not coming tomorrow, and it was not being made by a tailor. It was neatly reposing on a coat-hanger in the emporium of the Paris Gents' Out-fitters, an instalment house that dealt principally with

Mexicans of an unprosperous class and colored people. And in the ordinary course of events, even under exceptionally favorable circumstances, he had not expected to come into possession of it under three weeks' time.

The policy of the Paris Gents' Outfitters, as regards the instalment accounts of Afro-Americans, differed somewhat from the methods of instalment houses in certain more northern portions of the country. The indubitable success that had come to Messrs. Eph Katz and José Garcia, who were the Paris Gents' Outfitters, was in no small degree due to the fact that San Antonio negroes saw nothing unusual in these methods. In brief, the system was this: A colored man, desiring to purchase clothing, selects it, makes an initial payment, and goes on his way. From time to time, as agreed or otherwise, he makes other payments. When he has made the *last* one, he gets the clothes.

To sundry persons who at one time and another had protested to Mr. Eph Katz that this was no more than paying in advance and waiting for delivery of the goods while giving the Paris Outfitters the use of the money, and that the customers of the place might just as well save their dollars and then go and buy for cash at a store where they wouldn't have to pay instalment prices, Mr. Katz had replied, with a modicum of truth:

"Colored folks, y'understand, wouldn't ever save up enough cash to buy a pair of pants yet, let alone a

whole suit, so we should worry about losing the trade to a strictly spot-cash house. And as for letting 'em have the garments before they get 'em all paid for, me and Mr. Garcia ain't in business at no doctor's orders for any health reasons whatever, so if they don't like it they should trade elsewhere and maybe they get used better and then, again, maybe they don't."

Almanzar had a suit, ordered and saved for him under such a contract as was customary, hanging in the store of the Paris Gents' Outfitters. Its total price was \$14.70. He had paid, on account, \$11.70—at the rate of a dollar a week except once, when, on his way to the store on a Saturday evening, he had met two ladies of the younger A. M. E. Zion Church set and felt impelled to buy three ice cream sodas. That week the Paris Outfitters' books credited him with only seventy cents.

He still owed three dollars, which must be liquidated before he could expect to take that new suit across the threshold of the clothing emporium. He knew the hopelessness of asking Mr. Katz or Mr. Garcia to trust him. His wages were already drawn ahead with Mrs. Farnsworth.

Sighing, he hung the damaged coat across a chair-back and prepared for bed. If the tear were not on the shoulder, perhaps it could have been mended so it would not show—much. Even where it was, perhaps

he could have got by with artistic repairs if he hadn't bragged about the new clothes; but now he *had* to have them—Miss Susietta would be certain to notice. He wished he had not been obliged to talk quite so brash, but he couldn't see how he could have been expected to talk differently under the circumstances.

Well, it was no use worrying over something that would not become an acute problem until tomorrow. He wondered how he would go about it to get the new suit. Calmly wondering, he fell asleep promptly and soundly.

Mrs. Farnsworth, leisurely dressing, the following morning, stopped suddenly and spoke to Mr. Farnsworth, who was trying to sneak in a beauty nap:

"For goodness' sake! Do you hear that?"

"Hear what?" he murmured drowsily.

"Almanzar. Out in the yard. He's cutting *kindling*."

"Must be a Norther just arriving."

"But there isn't. It's a beautiful morning. Our windows are all open, and the wind is south. I never knew him to do that before in all his life. I never knew *any* house-boy to do it until it was absolutely necessary."

Mr. Farnsworth slid off into the nap during these remarks, and forgot them when, ten minutes later, he finally awoke and began to dress. Becoming a little

more alert and coherent after his first cup of coffee, he noticed that the breakfast was unusually appetizing. Almanzar came in from the kitchen on some errand, and his employer spoke appreciatively:

"These are as nice waffles as you ever made, Almanzar."

"Yassuh," Almanzar replied, simply, and slipped from the room.

"Now you've certainly done it!" Mrs. Farnsworth declared.

"Huh? Done what?"

"Let me in for whatever it is he wants me to do. Do you know what that boy has been up to this morning?"

"He's been up to some good cooking; I can swear to that."

"He has chopped enough kindlings for three cold days. He has cleaned out the refrigerator, without being told—even the drain pipe. He has polished the living room andirons. And right at this minute, between jobs, he is washing the kitchen windows."

Mr. Farnsworth asked, rather blankly: "Who usually washes the kitchen windows?"

"*He* does—about the third day I fuss about it. And I have to stand over him every minute to see he does it, because he thinks I have it done at least twice as often as is necessary. I have those windows cleaned once a month, and it is just two weeks ago yesterday

since he did them last. And I never told him to do a single one of those things today."

Mr. Farnsworth laughed as he folded his morning paper and reached for a cigar, preparatory to leaving for his office. "Something tells me," he said, "that within a few hours you are going to be made the victim of an artistic touch."

"You certainly can see things after you've had your second cup of coffee," his wife smiled. "Oh, well! It's worth something to get so many things done without an argument."

The expected happened at luncheon time. Almanzar, who had been working all the forenoon without a minute's let-up, started briskly for the kitchen, after receiving some instructions as to dinner, and turned back.

"Oh, Miz Fahnswo'th," he said, softly, as though it had that moment occurred to him. "Will you let me have three dollahs an' a half, please, m'am?"

"Three dollars and a half! You've drawn all your this week's pay but one dollar already."

"Yassum. I'd like to have three dollahs an' a half, please. I gotta get some clo's."

"Clothes! Why, you haven't had that blue suit but——"

"Yassum. I done tore it. Tore it bad. Plumb across the back of the shouldeh, Miz Fahnswo'th. Caught it on er nail. I'll get it an' show it to you. It

jes' natchally kain't be repaihed a-tall. An' I gotta go to a festerval this evenin'; I already invited a girl to go with me, Miz Fahnswo'th. At the *big* chuhch."

"I'll let you have enough money to have it mended."

"No, m'am. It kain't be mended, excep' to weah eve'y day. An' I need to get a new soot I got waitin' down to the Paris Gents' Outfittes. I gotta mek jes' a li'l' payment to get it. *Please* let me have three dollahs an' a half, Miz Fahnswo'th. You kin take it all out nex' week."

Mrs. Farnsworth, who knew, if she did take it all out the following week, that she would sink into the class of cruel and unnatural employers, tried to compromise.

"Three dollars and a half is a lot of money, Almanzar. Perhaps I could—— Go get me the receipts on the clothes. Let's see how much you owe."

The servant was back promptly with the blue coat—the rent in its shoulder aggravatingly displayed—and his receipts from the Paris Outfitters. These showed a balance against him of three dollars, a fact of which he was perfectly aware; he wanted the other four bits for ice cream and similar luxuries. He showed great surprise, however, when Mrs. Farnsworth, by simple addition and subtraction, demonstrated that the balance was less than he had stated, and amended his request to an even three dollars.

After some discussion, during which he listened

with a tolerance that even approached interest to a repetition of peculiarly Caucasian ideas as to saving money and taking care of clothes, he got the three dollars. Then he asked for an afternoon off in order that he could get the clothes. Mrs. Farnsworth told him he could go if he would be sure to return in time to get dinner.

Soon after two o'clock he appeared in the store of the Paris Gents' Outfitters, laid down on the counter three silver dollars, and asked for his new suit. Mr. José Garcia, after consulting a large book, said briefly:

"You owe six dollars on that suit."

"No, suh," protested Almanzar. "I paid 'leven-seventy, an' I owe three dollahs."

"You paid *eight*-seventy," Mr. Garcia replied, coldly. "Give me six dollars and you get the clothes."

"But I got the receipts," the boy cried, desperately.

"Give them to me," demanded Garcia. "Give them to me and I'll see whether you have or not."

If Mr. Garcia had merely asked for the receipts in a friendly manner, Almanzar undoubtedly would have handed them over, but the harshness of his demand stimulated suspicion. Almanzar suddenly remembered that he had heard it gossiped among his people that this had happened before; that persons who had purchased clothes and thought they had enough money to make the final payment found they were in error. Knowing how easy it was for colored boys to be mis-

taken in matters of finance, he had paid little attention to the occasional rumors that had come to his ears, but now he knew they were true. He also had sense enough to know that if he ever passed those receipts across the counter to Mr. Garcia they might never come back into his hands.

"I got 'em home," he declared. "I'll go get 'em." He returned the three dollars to his pocket and made a hurried exit.

Five minutes later he was sitting in the shabby office of J. Montgomery Clodden, attorney-at-law, Mr. Clodden, a shifty-eyed mulatto of middle age, had amassed a considerable quantity of real and personal property by looking after the interests of colored folks in trouble—second. He looked after the interests of J. Montgomery Clodden first. To the lawyer Almanzar told his troubles, producing the receipts.

"Hm!" Clodden put on gold-bowed spectacles and studied the slips. "I should say there would be no difficulty whatever in recovering at law—by suit, sequestration, and judgment."

"Yassuh," replied Almanzar. "Does you think you can get my clo's?"

"Have you got the three dollars?"

Almanzar handed them over.

"Wait here," the lawyer commanded. "I'll go over an' see these people. Then I'll come back. Wait here."

He was gone twenty minutes. When he returned, his manner was grave.

"I am sorry to say, young man, that they absolutely refuse to deliver the clothes. I think they are in a conspiracy to—ah—prevent you from receivin' the use an' behoof of your raiment."

Almanzar, who understood only the first sentence, took back the receipts. "Can't you get me my soot?" he asked.

"Oh, yes. It will be a very easy matter. We bring proceedin's, first applyin' to a justice of the peace for a writ of sequestration, and then—— How much money have you got?"

"Three dollahs. You've got it."

"Can you get five more?"

"But I don't owe 'em but three dollahs."

"The five would be for the costs of the proceedin's." The lawyer rose. "Go get five dollars an' bring it to me, an' we will promp'ly institute proceedin's at once."

"Yassuh," agreed Almanzar. "Well, I reckon I'll be goin'." He held out his hand. "My three dollahs, please, Mista' Clodden."

The lawyer smiled paternally. "I have to have that as a fee for goin' to see these people an' bein'—ah—retained in your case. Come in when you get the five." Almanzar found himself standing helplessly and hopelessly in the corridor.

If no white people had been involved in the transaction at all, Almanzar probably never would have thought, desperate as was his need, of appealing to whites to help him out. That would have been to "tell cullud folks' business." But the Paris Gents' Outfitters were white. Clearly Lawyer Clodden could not secure him justice. He knew who could.

Mr. Farnsworth, immersed in a lot of important figures, called, "Come in," to a knock on his private office door, and a clerk from the outer room entered.

"That colored boy that works for you is outside," she said, "and says he wants to see you on something important."

"Bring him in," said Mr. Farnsworth. "Hello, Almanzar. What's up?"

It took the servant but three or four minutes to pour out his woes, during which he told all his experience with Mr. Garcia, but never once mentioned his call on Lawyer Clodden. It took Mr. Farnsworth but a moment more to look at the receipts, and to see that the total of the bill was stated on the first one, and that Almanzar's contention was unquestionably correct.

"You leave these receipts with me and I'll fix it up tomorrow," he said. "I'm terribly busy this afternoon."

Almanzar became panic-stricken. "*Please, Mista'*

Fahnswo'th!" he implored. "I done tore my clo's an' I'm goin' to a festerval tonight. I jes' natchully *got* to have that soot this evenin',"

Mr. Farnsworth crossed the room and got his hat. "If you've got to, I suppose you've got to," he fumed, "but I wish you could arrange your troubles so you didn't have to pick my busiest days every time I get you out of a mess."

"Yassuh," grinned Almanzar. Mr. Farnsworth having taken charge, his difficulties could be considered over.

"Where did you get three dollars all at one time?" Mr. Farnsworth asked, as they went down in the elevator together.

"Miz Fahnswo'th done advance' it to me."

"Oh, yes. I remember."

Almanzar vaguely wondered what it was Mr. Farnsworth remembered. He did not ask, however, and his employer volunteered no information. They arrived together at the store of the Paris Gents' Outfitters, where Mr. Farnsworth stated the situation, as he saw it, with some force. Mr. Garcia contented himself with merely repeating that the books showed a balance due of six dollars, that if there were any receipts that did not agree with the books they were probably forgeries, and that he certainly did not propose to surrender the clothes unless the balance was paid that showed in his accounts. He added that Mr.

Farnsworth could come back later, however, and see his partner, if he wanted to.

Mr. Farnsworth was not always tolerant of Mexicans. Furthermore, his mind was on that array of figures in his desk, and he had not for a moment anticipated any real opposition. He spoke with some heat.

"If you think I haven't anything to do except come to this store two or three times to get a colored boy a suit of clothes that he is entitled to, you are mistaken," he said. "Now I don't propose to argue this with you. I want you to give this boy his clothes, and give them to him now. If you don't, I'll find a way to make you. I'll start something that will get them mighty quick!"

Mr. Garcia did not know Mr. Farnsworth and he did not like gringos, anyway. In addition to this, he and Mr. Farnsworth were not thinking of the same thing. "Starting something," in Mr. Garcia's experience, meant something physical.

"You will, eh?" he exclaimed, smiling a nasty little smile that exhibited a row of very even, very white teeth. "Well, mister, suppose you start it!" And Mr. Farnsworth, with a shock, realized that the merchant, idly dropping his hand to the counter beside him as he spoke, had rested it on the handle of a knife with a blade about five inches long, undoubtedly kept there for just such emergencies, the Mexican mind fancying sharp steel as a backing for disputes.

This was an angle to a business difference that Mr. Farnsworth never had encountered, and for a second he merely stared at the knife. He was not a large man nor a violent one, and though his face flushed with exasperation and then went pale with anger, he instantly realized the futility of further argument. He turned, without a word, and walked through the door to the street. Almanzar was waiting for him on the sidewalk three doors away. It occurred to Mr. Farnsworth, afterward, that the boy had been right at his shoulder when the Mexican reached for the knife.

Almanzar looked trustingly into his employer's face.

"All right, Almanzar. We'll fix it. Come on," Mr. Farnsworth said, and marched, as fast as he could walk, to the offices of his own personal attorney, Judge Lee Stevens, a leading representative of the Texas bar.

The lawyer was at leisure, and Mr. Farnsworth was shown into his private office.

"Hello, Fred," hailed the judge.

Mr. Farnsworth was too excited to waste time in preliminary courtesies. "Say, Lee!" he exclaimed. "I've started something I can't finish. I guess you'll have to help me out. A gang of instalment pirates is trying to trim my darky—I've got him out in the other room—and I went over to try to get him a square deal,

and—— Say, Lee! Darned if a greaser didn't pull a knife on me!"

Rapidly he recounted the whole story. "What's the answer?" he concluded. "Ought I to go to the police?"

"I wouldn't," advised the attorney. "It's your word against this Garcia's about the knife, and what you want isn't to get him arrested, anyway, but to get your boy's clothes. No question about the nigger being right, I suppose?"

"No. Here are his receipts. And he's a good boy, anyway."

Judge Stevens looked them over; then consulted his watch. "Let me have these, and the money for the balance, and I'll go right over there. You run back to your office and attend to your work. I'll get the clothes—or I'll give that little old instalment house a bunch of trouble that'll make them wish they'd come across in the first place."

"Fine!" exclaimed Farnsworth, appreciatively. "Send the bill to me, of course."

"There won't be any bill, Fred, unless I have to run up some costs. Seeing that good niggers are protected against that kind of people is one of the things we're supposed to do. Give me the three dollars, and tell the boy to come along with me."

Mr. Farnsworth opened the door. "Come in here, Almanzar," he called. "Judge Stevens is going over

with you to try to get your suit. You do just what he tells you. Give him the money."

Almanzar twisted his hat in confusion. "What money, Mista' Fahnswo'th?" he stammered.

"The three dollars to pay the balance. The three dollars Mrs. Farnsworth let you have."

"Yassuh. I ain't got it."

"Where is it? You didn't give it to the clothing man?"

"No, suh. I done give it to 'at cullud lawyer—Clodden."

"This is new to me," Mr. Farnsworth said. "You didn't tell me about that."

"Yassuh. No, suh. I done give it to him to go ovah an' pay fuh the clo's, an' when he come back he says he couldn' get 'em. So then I come to you, suh."

"But the three dollars?"

"Yassuh. Mista' Clodden he said he natchully had to keep it. He said it was a detainin' fee, I think he said, suh."

"Sounds like Clodden," Judge Stevens remarked. "Kiss it goodbye, Fred. It's gone."

"You ought to have known better than to give it to him," Mr. Farnsworth sputtered to Almanzar. "Can't you learn anything? You gave Clodden all the money you had in your pocket the last time you got arrested, and he didn't do anything to earn it."

"Yassuh. I wanted him to go ovah an' get my *clo's*."

"Some day we'll take the trouble to disbar that yellow rascal," Judge Stevens said. "It won't be easy, though. He always seems to keep within the law."

"But it's practically stealing money. He's got Almanzar's three dollars, and I doubt if he even went near the store to demand the clothes."

Judge Stevens shrugged his shoulders. "It wouldn't have done any good if he had, of course, and he knew it. Certainly it's robbery, but he calls it a professional retainer, and what could a committee of the bar association do, with him talking smoothly on one side and this boy of yours trying to explain it on the other?"

"Oh, well," Farnsworth sighed, reaching for his pocketbook. "This *was* Almanzar's trouble, but it's mine now. We've got to get those clothes. Here's the three dollars." He turned sternly on the colored boy. "I'm not giving you this money," he said. "Only lending it to you. Mrs. Farnsworth will take it out of your wages."

"Yassuh," grinned Almanzar, with relief. *That* was over.

"Come on, boy," commanded Judge Stevens, and Almanzar followed him. Mr. Farnsworth returned to his office.

At the store of the Paris Gents' Outfitters, Judge Stevens left Almanzar out on the sidewalk, and entered alone. Mr. Katz had come in during the period that had elapsed since Mr. Farnsworth's departure, and came to meet the lawyer, who handed him his professional card. Mr. Katz read it and looked inquiringly up at the attorney. Mr. Katz was five feet five inches in height. Judge Stevens was six feet one, and generously wide.

"I've been retained by Mr. Frederick Farnsworth," he said, "to see you about a suit of clothes his colored servant bought here. The servant's name is Evarts—Almanzar Evarts. He has paid \$11.70. He owes you three dollars. Here is the three dollars. I want the clothes."

Mr. Katz assumed his sternest manner.

"More trouble we are having over that one suit of clothes," he said, "than we should have if we was outfitting the army and navy of the United States. Twice already, my partner tells me, somebody has been to get that suit of clothes, and a man comes in here, with this here big nigger as a bodyguard, y'understand, and threatens my partner that he will start a rough-house unless——"

"I know all about that. He didn't. Mr. Farnsworth isn't that kind of a man. And your partner started to pull a knife. I might stop to remark that if anybody in here starts to pull a knife or a gun on

me, I shall not wait to send for the police. You understand me, I hope."

"Nobody in here ever wants any trouble with anybody," Mr. Katz protested, "but when a party comes in and says he wants a suit of clothes for three dollars on which, y'understand, there is a balance due and unpaid of six dollars——"

Judge Stevens interrupted the flow of language by producing Almanzar's receipts. "Here are receipts for \$11.70," he said, "on your regular receipt forms." Mr. Katz extended an eager hand. "Wait a minute. Before I give you those receipts, I want to mention that I am merely handing them to you for you to look at, and that I expect you to hand them right back to me. If anything should happen to them while they are in your possession—if they should happen to get torn, or dropped into a drawer—you are going to have me to deal with—personally. Do you get me?"

Mr. Katz evidently did; the eager gleam died out of his eyes. His partner, who was now at his shoulder, did not participate in the conference. Mr. Katz took the receipts, ran over them perfunctorily, and handed them back to the lawyer.

"Three of them receipts," he remarked, coldly, without indicating which three, "is a forgery. The amount due on the suit is six dollars."

"All right!" Judge Stevens replied, promptly, restoring the slips to his pocket. "Now I'll tell you what

I'm going to do. I'm going over to the court house and bring suit for these clothes, and have an order of sequestration issued. And if you think this colored boy forged any of these receipts, you bring charge against him and send him to the pen, if you can. And if you try it, his employer is back of him, and I'm back of him, and we'll give you the finest run for your money you ever had in your life."

"I should worry," said Katz. "There's a pretty chance a jury would take the word of a nigger, y'understand, against a merchant of the city, which he is in good standing and——"

"But you won't be a merchant of the city, either in good standing or out of good standing, by the time I leave the office of the justice of the peace about fifteen minutes from now, I'm going to drop on the district attorney. I'm going to tell him what kind of a place you're running—a store to trim colored folks out of their money, just because they're poor, and ignorant, and usually lose their receipts. I'm not only going to get that suit of clothes, my friend, but I *think* I'm going to send you to jail. I'm going to try my best, anyway."

He turned abruptly and walked toward the door. He had nearly reached it when Katz called to him.

"Oh, mister! Judge Stevens! Just a minute. The merchant was smiling ingratiatingly as the lawyer

faced him. "Say, listen, judge! This is certainly one on me, y'understand. That you should go to the district attorney I am not caring at all, because I am running an honest business, and I have some friends at the court house myself, as far as that's concerned, y'understand. But what is right is right, and my partner, Mr. Garcia, he tells me just this minute that he is looking into the books and he finds that this here, now, Evarts *did* pay that three dollars, just like he said, only it got accidentally credited to the account of another nigger named Evans. We had a new bookkeeper, Mr. —, Judge Stevens. Mistakes will happen, Judge Stevens, in any good business house."

Judge Stevens stepped to the door and called Almanzar. Five minutes later the darky, trying to hide a succession of grins, had the new suit safely in a box under his arm. Judge Stevens had caused him to identify it carefully before accepting it, to prevent accident.

It suddenly occurred to him, as Judge Stevens, on the sidewalk, told him to run along home, to be a good boy, keep out of trouble, and never trade with the Paris Gents' Outfitters any more, that it was getting terribly close to time to get dinner. He therefore rode home, instead of walking. This left him only twenty cents. Life wasn't an unalloyed joy, after all; first came one problem, then another.

He prepared and served a very good dinner. Then,

after Mr. Farnsworth had gone into the den to read his paper, Almanzar approached Mrs. Farnsworth.

"Please, Miz Fahnswo'th, will you let me have fo' bits?" he asked.

"Certainly not. My goodness, Almanzar, you must think I am made of money! Fifty cents! After all you've had today."

"Yassum. I'm goin' to festerval, Miz Fahnswo'th—at the *big* chuhch—en I ask' a cullud girl to go, en I *got* to have a li'l' change."

"You had already drawn all this week's pay but a dollar before this morning. Just one dollar you had coming to you tomorrow night. And then I let you have three dollars, and this afternoon you got three dollars more of Mr. Farnsworth. Why, you won't have a single cent coming to you *next* Saturday night, unless maybe I let you have a dollar then on account."

"Yassum. You an' Mista' Fahnswo'th certain'y good to me. Fo' bits I need, Miz Fahnswo'th, to take this cullud girl I ask' to the festerval. It costs twenty cents fuh us to get in, and two ice creams is twenty cents mo', an'——"

"Haven't you any money at all?"

"Only twenty cents. An' at the festerval——"

She compromised on a quarter.

Almanzar, attired in his new clothes, found it was getting late and took a street car downtown. Forty-

five cents would pay for the two admissions, and purchase ice cream, and leave five cents over. Five cents wouldn't buy anything at a church festival; he might as well spend it for carfare.

As he stood waiting in the dusk for his car to come along, three or four other people came and waited on the same corner. One of them was colored; in the headlight's glare, as the car approached, he saw it was Lawyer J. Montgomery Clodden. Clodden did not observe Almanzar.

The car was already crowded, both in the seats for white folks and those reserved for colored people. There was quite a jam in the rear vestibule as the new passengers got on. The white people went first, then the colored lawyer swung his bulk up the step, in a slow, middle-aged way. Almanzar was directly behind him.

Over the lawyer's shoulder, Almanzar saw that Clodden was paying his fare with a dollar bill, out of a little folding billbook. He noticed, as he held out his own nickel, that there were exactly three one-dollar bills left in the pocketbook.

Almanzar's tendencies were honest. If there had been ten dollars in the lawyer's little pile, he probably never would have thought of doing what he did. But there were three—*his* three dollars. On best authority he had it that Clodden had stolen them from him, and that never, never could he get them back.

Clodden, crowding forward, slipped the billbook back into his hip pocket. His coat caught on the top of it and left it exposed, in front of Almanzar's eyes. It screamed temptation. His own money!

More people got on at the next corner, and Almanzar was pushed forward, squeezing Clodden, who had not once turned his head. The pocketbook was in front of the boy's hand. It felt loose. A second later it was in Almanzar's trousers pocket. Almanzar left the car at the next stop.

He started to walk across town, swinging along with his hand in his pocket, clutching his newly-recovered wealth. As he walked, he thought quite coherently. Lawyer Clodden would sooner or later discover he had lost his purse. Somebody might have seen Almanzar on the car. He might be suspected.

He sighed; there was always a fly in the ointment. Mr. Farnsworth had a folding billbook very much like this one, which he had often coveted. He would have liked very much to keep this, but it could not be. Billbooks, he told himself, could be identified, but money—just money—has no home and all looks alike.

Passing through a patch of unusually dark shade, he opened the billbook and transferred its contents to his pockets. He came to a bridge spanning the river, a bridge with a metal railing, like a fence. It might not do for him to be seen throwing something into the stream. He stopped, stood looking over the

rail. He tucked the empty pocketbook into the waistband of his trousers, and shook his leg until it fell out beside his foot. A slight kick, and he heard the faint *plat* as the leather struck the water. He struck out swiftly for the home of Miss McCoy. As he walked he hummed a happy refrain.

Colored society was out in force at the Union Baptist Church—designated, in colored parlance, not only because of its size but for its prestige as well, the Big Church. It was a grand occasion, one of the most successful festivals, every one agreed, that the city had ever seen. Almanzar set out to see to it that Miss Susietta had the time of her life. Any idea of *saving* a part of this money of his that had been so miraculously restored to him never entered Almanzar's head.

They had eaten sandwiches and salad and cake and ice cream. They had drunk coffee and lemonade—three glasses of lemonade apiece. Almanzar, with good reason, felt he had not exerted himself in vain.

A passing youth stopped to gossip with them, where they sat satiated with food and drink.

"Did you heah what happen' to 'at ol' Lawyer Clodden?" he giggled. "He jes' arrive'; I heard him oveh by the do' talkin' to the rev'ren'. He done los' his pocketbook with all his money, an' had to go back home an' get some mo' er else miss the festerval."

Almanzar achieved a look of intense boredom.

"F'om what I heah of this ol' Mista' Clodden," he

said, "I expec' maybe it do him good to lose a li'l' money once in erwhile. I've heard he meks it pretty hahd fuh people 'at has to have him do things fuh 'em. Me, I don' have him. When *I* gets in any trouble, I always has a *white* lawyer—us'ally Judge Stevens. I bet maybe ol' Clodden didn' lose no money. An' if he had any, it prob'ly belong' to somebody else."

A stout, perspiring young woman, chairman of the festival entertainment committee, came bustling up.

"We all ready foh you to sing, Mista' Evarts," she said. "Miss McCoy is goin' to play you' accomp'niment, ain't she? Listen! The rev'ren' is jus' gettin' ready to call it."

Sonorously the preacher made the announcement:

"I am requested by d' committee in chahge to rise at dis time to say 'at we shall now be favohed by a tenoh solo selection by Misto' Almanzar Evarts. Miss Susietta McCoy, who has recen'ly arrive' in ouah midst, will kin'ly favoh us by accomp'nyin' Misto' Evarts on d' piano."

Almanzar walked to the platform and sang his new song—the one she had taught him the evening before. As Miss McCoy played the accompaniment, she looked up into his eyes. A wonderfully attractive girl was Miss McCoy.

Almanzar was absolutely contented and happy. He had come near to not getting either clothes or money

—but that was past. He had mortgaged his wages for nearly a fortnight—but that was something to be considered when it pinched. His appetite was sated, his conscience was as clear as crystal—and Susietta had expressive, appreciative, soulful eyes. He felt, too, that the words of the song somehow fitted the situation, and his voice mounted with unusual expression as he sang the last lines of the refrain:

*An' you find, at the end of a perfec' day,
The soul of a friend you've made.*

EPISODE III

GIRDING LIONS

MRS. FARNSWORTH noticed, as she finished luncheon, that there was an unusual amount of traffic in the back yard. Almanzar seemed to be entertaining an exceptional number of callers. No less than five colored youths of about his own age had slid aimlessly through the gate since twelve-thirty, had gossiped in undertones and without seeming to have come for anything in particular, and had gone away again as unostentatiously and aimlessly as they had come.

She knew the ways of Afro-Americans; news was being distributed by the swift-pulsing underground. Whether or not she would ever know what the news was would depend entirely upon whether Almanzar thought it ought to be disseminated among white people. Asking him would be the last way to get it.

It had not occurred to her that the spreading subterranean waves of information might have an important bearing on the fortunes of her own home until Almanzar, having washed his luncheon dishes, came out to the front door and spoke to her where she sat knitting in the shade of the gallery.

"Miz Fahnswo'th," his pleasant, soft voice

drawled. "I thought I betteh tell you; I expec' I'll have to be goin' to wah."

She knew it was draft day, of course, and she knew that Almanzar had registered; quite vaguely she had wondered what chance there was that he would be taken. She had the impression the draft numbers would not be known in San Antonio until late in the afternoon.

"What makes you think you will be drawn?" she asked, humoring what she supposed to be merely his desire to discuss with one of his employers the possibility that he might be selected.

"I *am* drawn, Miz Fahnswo'th, 'way up to the top of the list. I guess sho'ly I'll have to go."

Mrs. Farnsworth dropped her knitting in her lap. "How could you tell that?" she demanded. "They are drawing the numbers now—away up in Washington city. We won't know what they are until we get the afternoon paper."

"Yassum. I mean no, m'am. They drewed my numbeh 'way up near the top—Numbeh fo' hunderd an' 'leven. Cullud boys that were down to the cote house heard the gen'leman read out my name. Yassum. They said they figure I'd have to be fixin' to go with the first lot. Will I have to go this week, do you reckon, Miz Fahnswo'th?"

She felt a distinct shock. Almanzar was a member of the family. She could not visualize him going away

to war, any more than if he had been a white friend. Foremost in her thoughts, after the first second, was the idea that she must not say anything to discourage him; he would get much of his own attitude of mind from what she and Mr. Farnsworth said.

"Why—— I don't think they are going to call the draft troops before fall," she said. "September, I think it said in the paper."

She thought he looked surprisingly cheerful; his next words explained it.

"Man told me," he said, "that you get thutty dol-lahs a month in the ahmy. I expec' they'll have me cook foh the white folks."

"Perhaps," she hesitated, "but I wouldn't bank too much on that, Almanzar. I think the colored boys are going to be put into regiments, to fight—regiments all made up of colored folks, you know, like the Tenth Cavalry."

He thought this over a moment.

"Man I used to know—friend of papa's—that was in a cullud regiment," he said, "tol' me the colonels an' cap'ns an' officers were mighty nice gen'lemen to wuk foh. He said they were most all Southe'n gen'lemen, that understood cullud folks, an' took right good care of 'em. You don' s'pose, Miz Fahnswo'th, they'll have colonels an' all f'om up No'th, that don' know about cullud folks, do you?" There was anxiety in his voice.

"I think I read they were talking of having colored officers for some of the colored regiments," she said.

Almanzar's face did not indicate pleasure at this information. He made no comment on it, however, but proceeded to another question that he had quite evidently framed before he came out to the door:

"Ef you got a minute er two, Miz Fahnswo'th, would you mind tellin' me what all this wah is erbout?"

She stared at him almost blankly. Surely he was entitled to know, and as surely she felt the hopelessness of trying to tell him. A minute or two to describe the miasma of kultur that had arisen from the swamps of autocracy to poison a peaceful world! She put it as simply as she could:

"It is a war to make people free."

"Yassum. Are theah slaves over theah in Europe, like us cullud folks were befo' President Lincoln?"

The deportations from Belgium and Northern France made her answer literally true. "The Germans have been making slaves of a great many people," she said. "And if Germany should win this war, she will make slaves of all the people in the world; not exactly the same kind of slaves your people used to be, but slaves to——" She was going to say "the German idea," but realized how impossible it would be that he could understand, and substituted, rather lamely, "slaves to Germany's way of doing

things, which is a bad way. Germany doesn't believe in liberty. Colored people ought to be glad to do their share because, of all people in America, they know the best what it meant not to be free."

"Yassum," Almanzar said, simply. "Some folks says one thing and some folks says another, an' I natchully wanted to know. Thanky', Miz Fahnswo'th. Kin I go downtown a li'l' while? I know this is my day in, but I'd lak to go down an' see Doctah Mastehs, please, m'am. I owe him a dollah on the las' time I was sick."

Doctor Masters was the Farnsworth family physician, who naturally took care of Almanzar's infrequent illnesses.

"I thought you were all square with him," Mrs. Farnsworth said. "And even if you aren't, have you got as much as a dollar left over from last Saturday?"

"No, m'am. My sisteh paid me a dollah an' a half, las' night, that she done owe' me sence Chris'mus. I meant to pay 'at doctah bill two three weeks ago; I thought maybe I'd go pay it this evenin', if you'd let me off."

Feeling positive that Almanzar's real reason was a desire to get out to discuss the draft, and that it was a perfectly natural desire, she consented. As he promptly disappeared toward his house in the back yard to change to his street clothes, she noticed, with a

pang of sadness over the change about to take place in the youth's life, that he was not singing. Nor was he smiling as he turned to leave her; plainly the draft now meant something to his mind other than cooking for pleasant white gentlemen at thirty dollars a month, board, and clothing.

Mr. Farnsworth came home from downtown soon after five o'clock. He had the newspaper in his hand.

"Well, they got Almanzar," he said, as he sank into a chair on the gallery. "His number was in the first fifty in this district. You had better go in and break it to him."

"He broke it to me," she replied. "He knew it at one o'clock."

"At one o'clock! Was he downtown?"

"No. The news came by darky wireless. Poor boy! He has no idea at all what it means. He asked me if he couldn't go as a cook? Fred, I'm awfully sorry. It isn't because we're going to lose him, but—— I wish we could get him exempted, or something. It's like sending a child."

"We lose a good servant and Uncle Sam gets a poor soldier; eh? I know. But there's nothing we can do, and nothing we ought to do. He has no dependent relatives, of course, and even if there were any way of getting him off, it would mean that another young fellow—either black or white—would have to take his

place. He'll go, all right; they're looking for great, big, husky boys such as he is."

"But he isn't brave, Fred. Only last night, when we were going to the theater, he asked me if he couldn't leave his dishes until this morning, because he didn't want to be left alone in the house. He said he couldn't ever tell, when he was alone, but somebody 'would come a-bustin' in on him.'"

"He fights well enough when he gets his temper up. Haven't I got him out of the hands of the police four times in three years for fighting? Don't worry. He won't make a first-class soldier, but there will be worse ones, not all of them negroes by any means."

The door between the butler's pantry and the dining room opened for a moment as Almanzar, getting dinner, came through on some errand, and out toward the front of the house floated his voice, lifted in song.

It was a hymn that he was singing and he was giving vigorous expression to its militant swing:

*Onward, soldiers, at the call,
Do and dare as heroes all;
Fight life's battles day by day,
Girding lions for the fray.*

His voice became muffled as the door into the dining room swung closed. Mr. Farnsworth looked at his wife with whimsical amusement.

"Poor boy, eh?" he said. "He seems to bear up under it with fortitude. Is the answer a sudden access of lofty patriotism or mere lack of understanding? What's that new hymn he is singing about lions?"

Mrs. Farnsworth laughed. "That's what I wondered, yesterday, when he began to sing it, and I got a look at his hymnbook in the kitchen while he was out in his house. 'Girding *loins* for the fray,' is the line. You know he doesn't read very rapidly; I suppose the word looked like 'lions' the first time he saw it, and he's been reading it that way ever since. Like the 'word-picture' in a child's mind that educators talk about."

"I'd like to have a picture of the menagerie that is in his mind when he sings about 'girding lions,'" Mr. Farnsworth said. He unfolded the newspaper. "They drafted quite a number of boys we know. Dick Emerson's oldest son; young Benham; that lanky boy of Hampton Everett's. I'll read you some of them."

Almanzar served dinner with no diminution of his usual cheerfulness. When Mr. Farnsworth remarked, as the soup came in, "Well, Almanzar, I see you're going to be a soldier," he replied with a smiling "Yas-suh." During courses they heard him singing *pianissimo* in the kitchen. It was the same hymn. Until his dishes were washed and put away and he set out, in his very best clothes, for his evening in town,

over and over again he girded lions. Above the clatter of dishes, at one time, he girded them extremely *fortissimo*. Ordinarily Mrs. Farnsworth stopped him when he sang too much or too loudly about the house, but this night she hadn't the heart to. She knew she would miss his sometimes slightly wearing happiness when he was no longer there to sing.

Almanzar went, that evening, to a lawn party given under the auspices of the Ladies' Aid Society of the A. M. E. Zion, of which his mother was an energetic officer. He arrived a little late, with a view to making an impressive entrance. Almanzar always made impressive entrances when possible; tonight he thought he might attract more attention from the young ladies than usual because of his prominence in the draft. He was not mistaken.

No sooner had he arrived than he was surrounded by boys of about his own age, who clearly felt that in some manner they could share in a reflection of his glory. He spoke patronizingly to them, shook himself clear, and headed toward a group at the further side of the enclosure in which, as a logical center, he discerned the sprightly figure and very light face of Miss Millie Estabrooks.

As regards girls, Almanzar was for the moment unattached, and for some time—to be exact, since two Sundays before, when he had discovered Miss Millie sitting before him in the congregation as he rose to

participate in a quartet selection—he had felt yearnings to become engaged again. Unfortunately the young woman had not seemed to reciprocate his leanings in her direction. On the contrary, she had been accepting the exclusive attention of Ginger Sharpe, who was some two years older than Almanzar, and whose position as chauffeur for a family that was not as watchful of its garage as it should have been made him a desirable friend and companion.

Included in the news that had come to Almanzar by underground, that noon, was the information that Ginger also had been drafted; indeed, “also” is hardly the proper word, seeing that his red-ink serial number had come out of the bowl earlier than Almanzar’s. His first thought, when he heard it, had been that this removal of his rival would give him a chance to lay siege successfully to Miss Estabrooks’ favor—a thought that abruptly faded when the next messenger with news from the court house told him he himself was in the list.

Ginger, he observed, was not in the little group that surrounded Miss Millie, which included a number of the better educated young members of the A. M. E. Zion congregation. The extremely illiterate did not care for Millie, esteeming her to be pernicketty. It was true she spoke with extreme care and precision, but why not? She had just been graduated from the Colored Normal School.

Almanzar lost no time in moving to her side; in fact, he quite unconsciously shoved two or three lighter weights out of his way at the last, because, approaching her from the other direction, he perceived that Ginger Sharpe also had just arrived and was losing no time.

He no more than had opportunity to take her hand and murmur his salutations in Mr. Farnsworth's best company manner, when Ginger came up. The chauffeur clearly considered himself to possess a proprietary interest. He apologized to Millie for not having called at her house to escort her, explaining that his employers had kept him out with the car.

"What will Mista' an' Miz Steinmetz do when you go to wah, Mista' Sharpe?" she asked, merrily. "I guess they'll have to get another driveh, won't they?"

"Oh, I don' know," Ginger replied, airily. "I don' know's I'm goin' to wah. Mo' I think of it, mo' I think I won't. Nossuh. What's the use my goin' out to get shot at? This ain't ouah wah, is it? This is those ol' Englishers' wah. Nossuh. I'm aimin' not to go."

"How come you' aimin' not to go?" an awestruck boy of eighteen asked the posing Ginger. "Ef they says you has to go, you has to, doesn't you? What you mean, this ain't you' wah?"

There was a hush while they awaited the reply, and Ginger saw an opportunity to achieve a certain repu-

tation for both wisdom and eloquence. What he did not see was the look in Miss Estabrooks' eye, and if he had seen it he perhaps would not have interpreted it correctly. Miss Estabrooks' grandfather had been in the Civil War when "the colored troops fought bravely." Her grandmother now drew a pension that made her envied throughout her neighborhood as one who could live without toil or spinning. An uncle had become a top sergeant in a Regular Army colored regiment. The atmosphere in which she had been reared did not make her sympathetic with slackers.

"I ain' got no quarrel with them German folks," Ginger said. "I know German folks—don't I wuk foh 'em? They got their failin's, lak eve'ybody else. They lock up their iceboxes, an' don't let their cullud folks do much pan-totin'. But they ain't bad folksees to wuk foh, an' I know it. An' I've heard 'em talk er lot erbout this wah. That's what I mean w'en I say it ain't ouah wah. It's ol' Englishers' wah. En' I ain't figurin' to go an' fight in it. Nossuh!"

"Huh! I'd lak to know how you'll git out of goin' ef them white folks says go," a voice remarked.

"You want know how I'll git not to go? You want to *know*?" By now Ginger had a large audience and an entirely attentive one, and he swelled to the occasion. "First I tell 'em I got tooberculosis an' rheumatism an' flatfoot. Then, ef they don' let me off, I jes' mentions that I'm the suppo't of my mama and

three sistehs. An' ef *that* don' do, why I tells 'em I'm a conscientious 'jector. An' then they *has* to let me off."

"Lawdy! What's 'at?" somebody asked.

"'At's er man what don' b'lieve in fightin' er-tall. *I* know how to do it." He waved his hand, to dismiss so small a matter, and turned to Millie. "Will you come an' have some lemolade?" he gallantly invited.

She did not reply at once, but looked across at Almanzar, who had been listening to Ginger's declaration of independence with all his ears.

"You was drafted, too, wasn't you, Mista' Evarts?" she said. "What do you think about goin'?"

Almanzar had a certain extreme sensitiveness to voice tones and inflections that is common to many of his race. He never had heard of the Civil War grandfather, the Philippines uncle, or the happily-idle, pension-rewarded grandmother, but he sensed quite without weighing the pros and cons that this soft-voiced girl with the *café-au-lait* coloring did not approve of Ginger's ideas. He answered unhesitatingly:

"I ain't fixin' to try to git out of it no way, Miss Estab'ooks. I'm drawed, an' I'm goin'. Ef they want me to wait till Septembeh, I'll wait till Septembeh. Ef they want me nex' week, I'll go nex' week. Wheneveh they says they want me, I 'low to go. Way I figure it, Miss Estab'ooks, this wah is a wah wheah they

fightin' to make folks free, an' us cullud folks we ought to want everybody to be free lak we been sence President Lincoln, an' so we ought to figure it's ouah wah. Yassum. That's way *I* figure it, Miss Estab'ooks."

She smiled upon him ravishingly. "That's the way I figure it, too, Mista' Evarts," she said. "It is sho'ly too bad eve'ybody isn't patriotic, like you are."

She looked at Ginger Sharpe and did not see him. "I'd certain'y admiah to heah you talk some more about it, Mista' Evarts," she murmured, "but there don't seem to be any room for you to sit down heah."

"We might go oveh to the ice cream tables," Almanzar suggested with eagerness. "They's always room theah."

Arm and arm they strolled across the lawn, while Almanzar swiftly applied his mental processes to a recollection of exactly how much change he had in his pocket and an analysis of how far it would go. He paid no attention to the scowling Ginger, nor to the giggles of other youths who were enjoying Ginger's discomfiture. "I'm sorry I didn' make you' close acquaintance earlier," he said, as they rose from the ice cream table twenty minutes later. "I'll have to see a heap of you in the nex' week to make up foh it; I expec' they'll put me in the ahmy erbout a week f'om nex' Wednesday."

"Oh, it's grand to be in the ahmy!" was her delicious reply. "Mista' Evarts, I jus' love a hero!"

At eleven o'clock, as they were preparing to leave the party together, Millie belatedly remembered a message her mother had asked her to give one of the elder sisters of the church, and asked him to wait a moment while she delivered it. It was then that Ginger Sharpe found his first opportunity to have speech with Almanzar alone.

He sidled up and spoke in a fierce aside—a church social was no place to start a ruckus—and his language was startlingly belligerent, coming from one who had publicly announced his conscientious objection to violence.

"Looky heah, you 'Manzar Evarts!" he gritted. "You stole mah lady, an' w'en I meets you somewheah I'm goin' to smash you' face in."

Although Ginger was nearly as big as he and had no small reputation for rough-and-tumble skill, Almanzar replied carelessly, even flippantly:

"Go 'way, niggeh! Ef you eveh distuhbs me, I'll take you by the ears, an' twist you' haid off an' throw it in you' face!"

For the next week, Almanzar ever caroled blithely as he went about his work.

"It puzzles me," Mrs. Farnsworth told her husband. "He knows he's going. He knows what war means—I've asked him little questions that prove it.

He has got all over the idea that maybe he will only have to cook, and really expects to have to shoulder a gun and get into the trenches, and perhaps get killed, and still he's as cheerful about it as though he were only going on a picnic. He sings more than ever."

"I noticed he was girding his lions again, just after dinner tonight," Mr. Farnsworth smiled. "It's my guess that he is soothed and sustained by the power of song. That isn't a correct guess, of course, but it is as good as any."

Almanzar's notice to appear for examination duly came to hand, and after he had pored over it a long time he took it to Mrs. Farnsworth and assured himself he had read its instructions aright. At the place and hour specified he was promptly on hand. There were several other darkies to be examined at the same time, and they were all put in a room together. Among them was Ginger Sharpe. He scowled at Almanzar, but made no reference to their feud, having weightier matters to worry about.

"Number thirty-two; George Washington Sharpe," a good-natured looking white man called at the door. "Come in here; the doctor's ready for you."

Ginger went through the door. It remained ajar and Almanzar heard him whining:

"Ain't no use to look at me, boss; really it ain't. I got toberculosis. Had it er long time. Only las' winter I coughed awful."

"That so?" a brisk, cheery voice replied—the doctor's voice, Almanzar guessed. "Well, we'll see. You're a pretty husky-looking nigger; nobody would guess it."

Followed a considerable period of silence. Then:

"I've got some cheerful news for you, George. There isn't anything the matter with you at all. No, you haven't got flatfoot, either; you were born that way. Passed!"

"But, listen, please, suh! I'm a conscientious 'jector."

Another white man's voice: "Is that so? Well, that is something different. What sect do you belong to? What church?"

"African M. E. Zion."

There followed a burst of laughter. "Nothing doing, nigger!" somebody said, authoritatively. "You get out of here and run along home and keep around where we can get you when we want you. *You're* going in the army."

Ginger, looking woefully depressed, came out, and at his heels the white man with the pleasant voice called: "Number forty-four; Almanzar Evarts." Almanzar stepped through the door, grinning embarrassedly.

The doctor took a good look at the boy's bronze torso. "My word, but you're a handsome young animal!" he exclaimed. "You aren't going to

say *you've* got tuberculosis or anything, are you?"

"No, suh," Almanzar said. "Ain't nothin' the matter with me, suh—nothin' that I knows of. Nos-suh."

"Great Cæsar!" a big, tall man sitting at a table cried. "The boy actually sounds like he *wanted* in. Ain't you got any dependent mother, or father, or seventeen small children, or anything?"

Almanzar laughed appreciation. "I ain't got nothin'," he declared. "I got a good job cookin' foh Mista' Frederick Fahnswo'th an' I ain't got nobody to suppo't but myself er-tall."

The doctor was progressing rapidly with the examination.

"I wish I had your build, Almanzar," he remarked, admiringly. "Any of the girls ever tell you you were good-looking?"

Almanzar giggled and refrained from answering. "You're a good boy," the big man at the table said. "All the colored folks ain't as willing as you are, although they're averagin' up well, at that."

"Well," Almanzar replied, encouraged by the praise and the sympathetic audience. "Way I look at it, suh, cullud folks ought to be as willin' tuh go as white folks. Ef the Germans should win this wah, theath won't any of us be free any more—way *I* see it."

"By golly, I wish all the *white* folks could under-

stand the meat of this whole business as plain as that," the big man cried. The doctor, who was fussing around Almanzar's head with queer big spectacles that had blinders in them, now interrupted with a string of questions about positions of letters of the alphabet, playing cards, queer lights that danced and changed places, and colors. He stepped back, after a little, and spoke pleasantly:

"I'm sorry, boy, but you don't pass. I couldn't explain it so you could understand, but it's your eyes. Don't worry. It's nothing that will ever make you blind or anything like that, but they're not good enough for the army."

"Now ain't that a shame?" cried the big man at the table.

"Yassuh," said Almanzar, simply. The big man got up and gave him a quarter.

He went back after his clothes, dressed, and hastened home. He was cheerfully singing about his work when Mr. Farnsworth, getting the news from his wife the moment he arrived, came out into the kitchen. Mr. Farnsworth seldom came into the kitchen.

"Well, Almanzar," he said, his real gratification showing in his face. "Mrs. Farnsworth tells me you didn't pass."

"Yassuh. Doctah found sump'n the matteh with my eyes."

His employer looked at him curiously. "Are you glad or sorry?" he asked.

Almanzar considered this a moment.

"Well, suh," he said, judicially, "I kain't say 'at I'm glad, an' I kain't say 'at I'm sorry. It was this-a-way. I knew I might go, an' I knew I mightn't. Ef it was my luck to get passed, it was my luck, an' ef it was my luck to get tuhned down, it was my luck—an' either way it was sho'ly boun' to be good luck."

"What makes you think so?"

Almanzar showed all his teeth. "You didn't notice that numbeh I had, Mista' Fahnswo'th. My red-ink numbeh was fo' hunderd an' 'leven, an' I was numbeh fohty-fo' in this distric'. *Whatever* happens to a cullud boy 'at gets fo'-'leven-fohty-fo' foh a number is boun' to be lucky, way the ol' folks tell it."

"You're a philosopher," Mr. Farnsworth said, and slipped him half a dollar. "And I don't know that being a philosopher isn't almost as good as being a hero."

"Yassuh," Almanzar said. "Thanky', suh."

Mr. and Mrs. Farnsworth, returning late that evening from a picture show, saw riding alone on the street car Doctor Masters, their family physician. The car was not crowded; they dropped into the seat behind him.

When they had exchanged greetings and the Farnsworths had asked after Mrs. Masters, who was spend-

ing a few weeks in the hills, a thought came to Mrs. Farnsworth.

"Did our boy Almanzar come to see you a week or two ago and pay you the balance he owed you?" she asked.

"Yes," Doctor Masters smiled. "He paid me one dollar, and ran up a new bill for four dollars, payable, as usual, a dollar every two weeks—with occasional exceptions due to unexpected expenses."

"Four dollars more!" Mrs. Farnsworth's exclamation evidenced her surprise. "Why, he didn't say anything about being ill."

"Oh, no. He wasn't. It was the day he was drafted, you know, and he just naturally couldn't wait, so he got me to examine him. He sure is a fine physical specimen, generally speaking, but after I got through with the usual tests, I ran him across the hall into McEttrick's office—McEttrick is an eye man, you know—and bullied Mac into examining his vision for two dollars, on the grounds that Almanzar was your nigger and an old friend of mine. Of course his eye trouble isn't ever going to do him any particular harm, with the amount of reading he wants to do, but he couldn't pass any army test in a million years. He's a pretty good boy, but I doubt if he would make much of a soldier, so I was glad to break the news to him. He seemed right pleased."

Doctor Masters looked quickly out of the window,

pressed the electric button, and sprang to his feet. "I nearly went past my corner," he exclaimed. "Good night."

Mr. Farnsworth stared into Mrs. Farnsworth's eyes, and Mrs. Farnsworth stared back into his.

"Masters told him the very afternoon of the draft," he gasped.

"Girding liars for the fray," she misquoted.

EPISODE IV

CHICAGO BOUND

RUFUS R. D. FARNSWORTH lay in a sunny corner of the screened-in back gallery, licked his paws, and followed Almanzar's brisk movements with reproachful brown eyes. Almanzar had just given Rufus a bath, with a dash of bluing in the rinsing water. Rufus therefore looked very beautiful, and sad, and unappreciative.

Almanzar, moving with unwonted celerity about the task of luncheon-getting because he had plans for the afternoon, caught this look as he turned from the icebox on one of his trips.

"Don't you cast no aspersin' looks on me, Rufus Ahdee," he said, earnestly. "You know well 'nuff I di'n' p'pose washin' you. But now I got you nice an' clean, maybe, ef you good dawg, maybe I take you foh a ni-i-ice walk this evenin'. But not ef you look at me thataway, nossuh! Wag you' tail, li'l' white dawg, ef you want to go erlong with 'Manzar. Maybe he take you oveh to his mama's house, an' maybe she give you a bone."

At this last word, the end of Rufus R. D.'s tail vibrated slightly, although he still viewed Almanzar without enthusiasm.

Rufus R. D., Spitz of excellent ancestry, was pure white from pointed muzzle to curling tail, and quite the prettiest dog in town. The "R. D." in his name had to do with the manner in which the Farnsworths originally came into possession of him. When first they rented their house, the owner, about to leave for a vacation in the North, asked them if they would keep the dog pending his return. The Farnsworths afterward acquired him by purchase, but the two initials that Mr. Farnsworth added to his name when first they had him as an incident of their lease, still stuck.

"R. D." stood for "Rent Dog."

Baths for Rufus R. D., whose hair was long, were no light task, and neither Almanzar nor Rufus himself favored them. An honorarium of fifteen cents for the servant went with each bath, but he never was able to see that the work and trouble and dampness and frank hostility on the dog's part that each washing aroused were quite worth it. Notwithstanding this, once cleanliness was accomplished—Mrs. Farnsworth was able, by urging, to get it done about once a fortnight—Almanzar was very proud of Rufus' looks. He liked to hold the spotlessly clean dog up so his whiteness was contrasted with his own dark bronze. He was not unaware that his own tinting was about the handsomest shade vouchsafed to members of the negro race, and nothing showed it off to better advantage than Rufus. Girls had mentioned this to him—three

or four of them. Miss Derisette Boody had once stated it most succinctly; her words lingered often in his memory:

"W'en you got 'at li'l' white dawg in you' ahms 'Manzar, you sho' is a tantalizin' shade o' brown."

Rufus, being not only a democratic dog but some times a combative one, was frequently badly soiled at such times Almanzar shunned him and spoke word of reproach. But when he was freshly laundered, the boy sought intimate association with him. His request to Mrs. Farnsworth, made that noon as she finished luncheon, was therefore not a surprise.

"Miz Fahnswo'th," Almanzar said, draping himself against the door to the little butler's pantry that intervened between dining room and kitchen. "Kin I please m'am, take Rufus Ahdee with me oveh to my mama's house this evenin'?"

"You'll probably let him get all dirty again," Mrs Farnsworth said. She really had not an objection in the world, but favors must not be granted too easily.

"No, m'am. I'll take good caih of him. I'll take him on leash all the way oveh an' *all* the way back. Mama ain' see 'at dawg foh awful long time. My folks say 'at's prettiest li'l' dawg in San 'Ntonio. They sho' like 'at Rufus Ahdee, Miz Fahnswo'th."

"Will you keep him from fighting?"

"Yassum. Yas *m'am!* He'll be on leash an

kain't get at otheh dawgs, an' you know he always comes when I call him, anyway."

"All right. Don't be late for dinner. Half-past four is the time to get back, you know; not quarter of five, as it was yesterday."

"Yassum." Almanzar started contentedly toward the kitchen. "Could I go now an' leave my lunch dishes ontwel dinneh time?" he turned back to ask. "They ain't many, an' I'll be sho' to get back early."

"All right," she again agreed. "Don't let him chase cats."

"No m'am. He kain't. I'll have him on *leash*, Miz Fahnswo'th."

Mrs. Farnsworth's eyes returned to a magazine that was propped up before her and she did not answer. Almanzar slid into the kitchen noiselessly and out through the back door to his little house in the yard. A few minutes later she heard him locking his door and calling Rufus. She noted, through a side window, as they departed, that Almanzar was attired in his very best clothes.

At the car line Almanzar, who never walked across the city when he had a nickel that he didn't see any immediate use for, took the dog in his arms and climbed aboard. He transferred downtown to a car that ran to the colored quarter in which his parents lived, and sauntered elegantly down their street, leading the immaculate Rufus by a leather leash.

He was on the point of turning in at his father's residence—a comparatively neat and well-kept four-room house—when a sash of bright pink in the doorway of the next house up the street caught his eye and held it. That was old Deacon Miller's house, and neither the deacon nor his withered wife was likely to flash pinkly. Almanzar seemed to remember that somebody had remarked, a week or so before, that the Millers were going to have company. He hardly waited for his mother to pass the time of day with him and comment admiringly on Rufus before demanding that the matter be straightened out in his mind.

"Did I see a strange lady oveh in the do'way of Mista' Miller's?" he asked.

"Hey you, Rufus Ahdee, git down off'm my lap; I ain' got no bone fo' you. Leastways, ef I has, I aim to git it w'en I gets ready. Git down! Ain't he the cutes' dawg, 'Manzar? Wait ontwel I go get him a bone. I got nice li'l' bone, Rufus, good fo' li'l' dawgs. . . . What's 'at you say? New lady? Oh, 'at's Miss Minnie Hurtle. She done come thisyer mawnin'. She's Miz Miller's niece f'om oveh Houston. Huh pa—he's Pullman po'tah—he's done been transferred f'om Houston to Chicago. She's jes' visitin' heah two three days befo' she goes on up theah."

While Rufus secured his promised bone—not such a

much of a bone, after all, his eyes remarked as he finished it—Almanzar asked more questions about Miss Minnie Hurtle. His information totaled the facts that she was twenty years old and somewhat pernicketty. As his mother finished the information, he noted, through the window, that Miss Hurtle had dragged a rocking chair out on the front gallery of the Millers' house and taken a seat. Miss Hurtle, from that distance, looked interesting.

Almanzar had removed the dog's leash on entering the house, and put it in his pocket. Now, remarking that he reckoned he would go over and call on the new company, he took Rufus in his arms, carefully adjusting him so the picture would be satisfying, and strode out through the front door. As he turned toward the next house Miss Hurtle met him more than half-way by springing to her feet, clasping her hands, and exclaiming, ecstatically:

"Ain' 'at the prettiest li'l' ol' white dawg I eveh did see!"

Almanzar achieved the feat of taking off his Panama hat and bowing without dropping, or even disarranging, the dog.

"Good evenin'," he said. "I don' guess you an' me eveh met, but my name is Evarts. My mama said I ought to call on you-all, an' it certain'y gives me the deepes' pleasure."

"Go 'way, Mista' Evarts!" Miss Hurtle cried.

"You' one of those flatterer gen'lemen, I kin plainly see 'at. Won't you come up on the gallery, an' I'll get another chair. He certain'y is the handsomes' dawg. What name's he got? What do you call him?"

"Well, he's got quite a lot of names," Almanzar replied, settling himself gracefully and putting the dog down. "Mista' Fahnswo'th—'at's my white folks—he mos'ly calls him Rufo. An' Miz Fahnswo'th, excep' when he's been fightin' or is awful dirty, she calls him 'snow-white lamb.' But I always calls him by his regular name, which is Rufus Ahdee."

"What's Ahdee?"

"White folks' name—family name, I guess. . . . Isn't it a pretty evenin'? I'm ve'y glad to help welcome you, Miss Hurtle. How long you plannin' to remain in ouah midst?"

Her reply, that she was to leave on the following Sunday morning—it now being Wednesday afternoon—gave him immediate grief, which he did not attempt to conceal. Miss Hurtle was even more attractive at close sight than at a distance.

Her dark mulatto skin was of the shade to be described as "bright." Her hair, which was comparatively long and straight, was becomingly arranged. Her mouth smiled easily and showed even, white teeth. Her eyes were large and brown, and she had a fascinating trick of raising them, looking one full in the face for a second with a glance that was admir-

ing rather than bold, and then dropping them quickly to her lap.

Almanzar had been girl-less for nearly three weeks. His heart, ever swift to respond to new emotions, went out to this stranger. Within ten minutes they were chatting as if they had known each other a month; before a half-hour had passed, Miss Hurtle had agreed to go to a picture show with him that night. Back in his mind were plans, as yet unspoken, for the other evenings of the girl's too short stay.

Never before had he been smitten quite so violently by love at first sight, and love at first sight was his specialty; he told himself that at last he was definitely and finally snared by Cupid. When Almanzar, being in love, set out to make a conquest he lost no time. Before he arose to go, suddenly realizing that it was already four-thirty, he and Minnie were calling each other by their first names.

Some five minutes after they had begun to talk, Rufus, wearying of lying unheeded at Almanzar's feet, rose, stretched, and wandered aimlessly around the corner of the house. Investigation of two garbage cans proving unsatisfactory, he continued his journeyings until he fell in with a scraggy, one-eared cat, which he happily pursued through six yards. The cat finally dove under a house, and he tried to follow, barking madly. Out of the house, eventually, came a rheumatic black woman, who reviled him and threw

firewood in his direction. When one of the sticks broke the window above his head, he went away.

By now he had forgotten that Almanzar was over on the next street, and he set out, in desultory dog fashion, in the general direction of home. After a time he came around a corner into view of a lovely three-cornered dog-fight, and proceeded to mingle therewith.

Not more than an hour before, a street sprinkling cart of loose habits had stopped for twenty minutes while its Mexican driver climbed down, borrowed cigarette makin's from a passing compatriot, and squatted in the shade to smoke and gossip at the city's expense. During this twenty minutes much water escaped from the sprinkler, and just as Rufus bounded merrily into the bickering that was in progress, the fight had reached the extensive mud-puddle thus caused.

Rufus' technique, upon entering a fight that was already three-cornered, was to dive quickly under the pile and bite all three dogs in the stomach, seriatim. This conduct had been known to have a most surprising effect; not infrequently it sent all the other dogs running and yelping in shocked protest.

It happened today, however, that one of the trio was a collie and another an Airedale, so they did not run, and a good fight was enjoyed by all. And as the battle occurred approximately in the center of the

mud-puddle, and Rufus was under the other three dogs his share of the time from Round One until the final bell, he was not a pretty dog when they all knocked off and called it a day. He limped a little as he trotted toward home, but his expression was one of entire satisfaction, for he had been the last dog to quit.

Almanzar left Miss Minnie Hurtle hastily, when he realized what time it was, and hurried to his car. There was dinner to be got and the dishes to be washed, and then—— His mind was on the picture show that night, and his plans for the morrow, and what he would do Friday, and how he and Minnie would spend Saturday evening. He was walking fast as he turned into the Farnsworth yard, hoping Mrs. Farnsworth had gone out for the afternoon and would not know how late he was. He observed, regretfully, that she was standing on the back gallery.

“Where is Rufus?” she demanded.

Almanzar’s jaw dropped and his eyes bulged. For one second he stood motionless, trying to recollect. He slipped his hand into his side pocket; the leash was there. As will overcame paralysis, he turned, in a panic, and started toward the gate.

“Where are you going?” Mrs. Farnsworth called.

“Back to mama’s. I done lef’ him theah. I d’clar’ to goodness, Miz Fahnswo’th, I fohget ’at li’l’ dawg completely. He’s settin’ oveh theah on er gallery.”

"You needn't go back; he's at home." Her voice was accusing. "Come right here and look at him, you good-for-nothing boy! Look at that dog! And I trusted you to take him out."

Almanzar saw, then, in a corner of the gallery, a mud-colored dog with a look of ineffable content in one eye and a half-inch-long cut over the other, systematically licking a larger gash in his foreleg. Rufus paused in his first-aid for a moment to glance cheerfully at Almanzar and thump his tail in pleased recognition.

The darky looked from Rufus to Mrs. Farnsworth, blankly. Then he took the leash out of his pocket and concentrated his gaze on that, as though it might shed some illumination on this mystery. A thought came to him, at last, and he remarked, brightly:

"He must've done come home."

"He must have," Mrs. Farnsworth agreed. "And tomorrow morning you will wash him again—and you won't get a single cent for it. The idea—letting him get away and get in a fight like that! Now wash his cuts and then hurry and get dinner; you're late enough as it is."

"Rufus Ahdee," said Almanzar, severely, as Mrs. Farnsworth disappeared toward the front of the house, "you certain done got me in trouble. When did you *leave*, li'l' white dawg?"

He skimped the washing of Rufus' wounds, which

were quite superficial, and went about his dinner preparations with his mind on Minnie and little else. Considering how far removed from the Farnsworth home his thoughts were as he got that meal, it was really surprising that, when he rang the dinner chimes, there was nothing missing from the table furniture except the salt and pepper, the butter spreaders, the soup spoons, and the napkins. These he supplied one at a time, at Mrs. Farnsworth's demand.

He began to wash the first course dishes while the second course was being eaten, and made such a clatter about it that Mrs. Farnsworth had to ring for him three times to bring the coffee. He climaxed his efforts by putting peach shortcake before his mistress minus anything with which to serve it, and absent-mindedly bringing a teaspoon when she mentioned the omission.

"Gracious, Almanzar!" she cried, impatiently. "What's the matter with you tonight? Haven't you any head at all?"

"No, m'am. Yassum," he replied, and endeavored to take away Mr. Farnsworth's coffee cup, although it was only half emptied.

"Now, stop!" said Mrs. Farnsworth. "I can plainly see you're anxious to get away, but we'd like to finish our dinner without being hurried. Go out into the kitchen, now, and when we're finished I'll ring."

"Yassum," Almanzar said, and slid through the door. When Mrs. Farnsworth did ring, however, he was out in his house putting on a clean collar. He finished his dish-washing with surprising speed, and was going out of the back door when Mrs. Farnsworth called to him.

"You remember you are to wash Rufus first thing after breakfast tomorrow," she said, in a voice he knew he would not dare disobey. "You are not going to tell me along in the middle of the forenoon that you forgot it and got started on something else."

"No, m'am. Firs' thing afteh breakfast," he repeated. "Yassum. I *want* 'at li'l dawg to look clean."

He took Minnie to a picture show, and on their way home he confessed to her that he couldn't remember when a lady had made such a hit with him the first day they met.

On Thursday night, leaving choir rehearsal early, he hastened to her side and they took a moonlit walk.

On Friday, having wheedled a dollar on account of his week's wages out of Mrs. Farnsworth, he escorted the girl to a vaudeville theater, where they sat in the front row of the gallery reserved for negroes, and afterwards ate ice cream in the very leading colored restaurant.

On Saturday evening they became engaged, and he

promised to meet her in Chicago within a month or two, to get married. It would be impossible for him to go to the train to see her off on Sunday, owing to the unfortunate circumstance that its departure and the Farnsworths' breakfast came at the same hour, but he said he would surely be thinking of her, and he was—so deeply that he burned up two ovenfuls of toast before he finally succeeded in getting his mind on what he was doing sufficiently to barely rescue the third. Happily the door to the dining room was closed and the Farnsworths were busy with the morning papers, so they did not smell the accident, and he succeeded in getting the débris concealed in the garbage can without discovery.

He sang in the choir as usual, that day, but without his usual enthusiasm. After church he set out to find a Pullman porter of his acquaintance with a view to making inquiries as to how colored folks set about it to get to Chicago. He had heard that, under certain circumstances, a Pullman employe can work a pull to get a colored friend carried along with him as helper, and it was important that he should now ascertain just the procedure that would bring about this desirable arrangement.

He could not find the man he was looking for, but in some subterranean way he learned of another colored man that could perhaps fix him up, if he could be located. Nobody seemed to know where this man

lived, and by now it was time for Almanzar to get home for dinner.

On Monday afternoon, as soon as the luncheon dishes were washed, he resumed his quest. He visited a barber shop, a pool room in the negro quarter, a third-rate hotel near one of the railroad stations, and a servant's house in the back yard of a mansion on a hill. At all these places he conversed with colored people, casually. Then he walked many blocks and accosted a tall negro who was standing on a street corner doing nothing, and whom he recognized only by description, and they retired to a doorway to talk it over. He was entirely satisfied with the progress he had made when he arrived at home.

Mrs. Farnsworth was reading a letter that had just come in a belated afternoon delivery. She looked up as he came through from the kitchen, with its contents uppermost in her mind, and said:

"I told you Mr. Farnsworth's aunt from Illinois, Mrs. Selwyn, was coming to visit us, didn't I, Almanzar? She will arrive Thursday. I want you to be a good boy while she is here."

"Yassum. 'At's A'nt Carrie, ain't it, Miz Fahnswo'th?"

"Yes. She is quite an old lady, and she's never been South before, and I want you to be very nice to her. It may mean some extra work, and I think

I will pay you a little more money a week while she's here—fifty cents."

Almanzar grinned. "Yassum. An', Miz Fahnswo'th. Will you please hold out two dollahs a week f'om my pay foh three weeks an' a half, an' 'en give it to me all at once?"

She looked at him curiously. "What are you planning to buy now?"

"I'm goin' to Chicago," he replied, simply.

"Chicago! You're going to—— How much do you think it costs to get to Chicago?"

"Seven dollahs. I know a cullud man, he's po'tah on Pullman cah, he'll get me to Chicago with him as sistant if I give him five dollahs. An' he says it cost ne erbout two dollahs to eat while I'm on my way. Yassum. Maybe I betteh have eight dollahs," he added, as though making a concession.

"But what has put that notion into your head? Why do you want to go to Chicago?"

"Man tol' me—cullud man, friend of papa's—man ol' me they's lots of good jobs foh cullud boys in Chicago now, Miz Fahnswo'th. Says they get ten twelve dollahs a week."

He clearly was in earnest.

"How far have you ever been away from San Antonio?" she asked.

"Which is farthest, Miz Fahnswo'th—New Braunfels or Seguin?"

"Seguin. Thirty-eight miles."

"Yassum. I been theah—to big cullud picnic."

"Do you know how far Chicago is? Fifteen hundred miles."

"Yassum. I knew it was a right smaht."

Four weeks was four weeks, and Mrs. Farnsworth knew that many things could happen in that time, but she could see that Almanzar, at the moment, intended to go and regarded this as a quite fitting form of notice. A sudden fear smote her.

"You can't leave while Aunt Carrie is here," she exclaimed.

"How long she goin' to stay, Miz Fahnswo'th?"

"A month. That will be at least five weeks from now."

Almanzar sighed. "All right, Miz Fahnswo'th; I wouldn't want to put you-all out any," he conceded. "An' ef I wait five weeks I'll have ten dollahs saved, won't I?"

Mr. Farnsworth came home not long afterwards, and while they awaited dinner his wife told him Almanzar's sudden resolution. "Could he do it?" she asked. "Could a Pullman porter get him to Chicago?"

"Search me!" Mr. Farnsworth replied. "There's a story to that effect; I've heard darkies talk about it. But whether it is really so, or only nigger talk, the Lord only knows. If he was threatening to go to-

morrow, I'd be inclined to worry about losing him. But five weeks! I don't think, if I were you, I should get excited about it at all."

"I sha'n't," she agreed. "I don't believe he could leave his wages with me until they amounted to ten dollars to save his life."

Mrs. Selwyn, from Illinois, arrived on schedule, and for several days nothing more was heard of Almanzar's plan to go North. It was on the following Monday afternoon that he himself introduced the subject, indirectly, in conversation with the guest.

Mrs. Farnsworth had gone down to the Woman's Club to a committee meeting, and Mrs. Selwyn was knitting placidly in the living room, while Almanzar did some odds and ends of dusting in her vicinity. She did not realize he was making the work in order to be within conversational distance of her; she knew very little about the ways of his race.

He talked as he worked; it was always his habit to talk when he was alone with his white people, unless they were reading or writing. This talk did not seem to lead anywhere in particular; it was just a series of rambling remarks of no consequence, that went on and on in the boy's soft, pleasant drawl. Mrs. Farnsworth would have answered his questions without half hearing them; Mrs. Selwyn did not find it so easy.

Presently he came to the subject that was in his mind most of the time.

"You live in Illinoy, don't you, Miz Selwyn?"

"Yes."

"Chicago is near Illinoy, ain't it?"

"Chicago is *in* Illinois."

"Yassum." Almanzar dusted the keys of the piano and moved over to the shelf above the fireplace. "About cullud folks in Illinoy, Miz Selwyn. Do cullud folks do pretty well up theah?"

Mrs. Selwyn did not live in Chicago, nor in any other large center of population. The little Illinois village that had been her home for almost seventy years was nearly a hundred miles from Chicago, and its population, even as tabulated and announced by the local Board of Trade, was only a trifle over three thousand. In that village resided exactly three negroes. One conducted a small tailoring establishment; one was a steady-going, reliable house carpenter; the third took charge, each spring, of the town's carpet-beating, and, at other seasons, white-washed fences. Mrs. Selwyn had never exchanged a word on any subject other than strict business with any one of them, but she vaguely knew they were self-respecting persons and not bad citizens.

Up to four days previously, she had never seen a street car with separate seats for negroes, and some reflection of this, superimposed on the thought that

the colored people of her village were quite different from Almanzar, dictated the form of her answer.

"Yes," she said. "Colored people do very well indeed. Colored people up where I live are regarded as entitled to just as much consideration as white people."

"Yassum," said Almanzar. "Well, I got to go out in er kitchen. Miz Fahnswo'th be home pretty soon, an' I ain't stahted lunch yet. Anything I kin do foh you, Miz Selwyn, befo' I get lunch?"

"No, thank you."

The boy faded toward the rear of the house, and Aunt Carrie sighed with relief. He made her uncomfortable, fussing around and talking so much. Privately, she thought servants ought not to be encouraged to do it.

Three nights later, pursuant to Thursday night custom, Almanzar arrived betimes at the church for choir rehearsal. He was usually prompt; this night he was unusually so. The choir-master had informed him, on Sunday, that he would be expected to rehearse a new duet for the following Sabbath with Mrs. William Johnson, who was the leading contralto of the choir.

Mrs. Johnson as an individual did not interest Almanzar—she was married, and stout, and not pretty, and of uncertain temper, and middle-aged, thirty-two or thirty-three years old at least—but rehearsing a

duet with anybody was something he would be almost willing to go barefoot and alone to do at any time. The only thing about his church work that interested him more than singing a duet was singing a solo.

Mrs. Johnson was not present when he arrived, and when the choir practice was ready to begin, still she had not appeared. A little girl came breathlessly in, just as they were getting down to work, with word that Mrs. Johnson could not come and probably would not be on hand the next Sunday, being ill of some mysterious malady that was believed to be "brek-bone fever." Apparently the duet would have to be postponed, and Almanzar continued his participation in the rehearsal with no attempt to conceal his gloom.

They had just finished a choral rendition of a hymn in which they were to lead the congregation, when two people entered the door of the church. One of them Almanzar instantly identified as Hop Peebles, a youth about his own age whose occupation was "divinity student"—a classification which, without entailing any real study on his part, allowed him to wear black clothes, a derby hat, and gold-bowed spectacles, and entirely to avoid work. With Peebles was a girl; a stranger. In the dim light back by the door, Almanzar could make out only that she was much taller than Hop, quite dark, with a graceful figure and the quick movements of youth.

Hop introduced her to the choir-master and the

three had a little talk, after the next hymn, during which Almanzar got a good look at the girl in a better light. The impression he had received of her at first was greatly strengthened; she was positively handsome. He observed, too, an attractive coquetry in her manner, and his heart increased its beat to four above normal. The divinity student, after a moment, sank languidly into a seat fairly well back in the church, and the choir-master led the new girl toward the singers.

"Ladies an' gen'lemen," he announced, unctuously, "allow me toe interjuce Sist' Lucindy Fisk, who has recen'ly arrive' f'om Yoakum, wheah Misto' Peebles infohms me she was leadin' contralto soloist singeh in the church of ouah d'nomination. Sist' Fisk has kin'ly consented toe join out with ouah choir, an' we is gre'tly please' toe welcome huh. Will you kin'ly move erlong, ladies an' gen'lemen, an' mek room foh huh in the contralto section. We will now go thoo the las' selection again—Numbeh Fifty-fo' in the hymnal, Sist' Fisk—omittin' the six' stanza."

Almanzar already had reached forward to pass the new sister his hymnbook, open at the place, and she thanked him with a brilliant smile. Her nose, he observed, was of a most adorable shape, and her lips were very red and easily given to laughter, and there was a twinkle in her eye.

"This is sho'ly ve'y kind'of you, Mista'——"

"Evarts," he supplied. "Evarts. I sing leadin' tenoh. I hope we get chance, here in choir or otheh-wise, to become betteh acquainted."

"The pleasure, Mista' Evarts, will certain'y be mutual," she sighed, ravishingly.

Almanzar's heart action went up five beats more, and he scowled in the direction of Hop Peebles, who obviously expected to take Miss Fisk home. They rehearsed the choral selection.

At its end the choir-master, who had been listening with increasing pleasure to the deep notes of the new singer's contralto, made an announcement.

"We had feahed, owin' toe the unfortunate absence of Sist' Johnson, that the duet we had planned foh the comin' Sabbath would have toe be omitted, but the arrival of Sist' Fisk meks it possble toe restore it to ouah program. An' we will bring the practice toe an end foh this evenin' with this numbeh. Sist' Fisk, would you-all be willin' to sing this duet to which I refuh with Bre'r Evarts?"

The girl flashed a look into Almanzar's imploring eyes, and nodded brightly. "I be chahmed to attempt it," she replied.

As they fussed with the music and the choir-master went over to give some instructions to the organist, an idea that had been forming in Almanzar's mind coalesced into an inspiration.

"Please excuse me fuh a moment," he apologized.

"I want to get drink of wateh; my throat is a little husky."

He hurried through the door into the back part of the church, where was located the kitchen for the use of sociables and festivals, and running water. But he did not stop to drink. Instead, he let himself out through a back door to the street, and hastily cast his eyes in both directions. Not fifty feet away, sitting on a curbstone with his back against a tree, he saw a black boy of ten years or thereabouts, whom he approached cautiously but swiftly.

"You boy!" he demanded. "You want to make a nickel?"

"How?" demanded the child, without changing his position.

"Do li'l erran' foh me. Li'l' erran' only to the do' of the chuhch. I give you five cents."

The small boy appraised Almanzar's raiment and showed interest.

"Ten cents," he countered.

Time was flying. "Five cents now an' maybe five cents afteh choir practice," said Almanzar. "'At de-pen's how well you do erran'."

The black boy rose and held out his hand. "Awri," he said. "Name it."

"They got telefoam pay station down to that cullud drug stoah three fo' blocks down the street, ain't they?"

The child nodded. "Buffum's Drug Sto'," he supplied.

"That's it. Now, listen, boy! Heah's you' nickel. Pay 'tention to what I say. When I go back you wait ontwel——" He gave hasty but complete directions. "An' don' fohget the sign. When I take handkerchief outah my breas' pocket an' wave it."

"I gotcha," the small boy said. "I'll be waitin' foh the otheh nickel w'en you come out."

Almanzar had been gone so short a period that, as he resumed his place beside Miss Lucinda Fisk, the organist had only had time to run through the piece once. Apparently his absence had not delayed them at all. He and she rose while the introduction was played, and he noted with pleasure that the top of her head was level with his eyes. He hadn't had a tall girl for a long time.

They sang the verse of the duet together, very well indeed, considering their lack of previous practice. Their voices harmonized beautifully.

*While we tarry yet a while
In this worl' of sin an' guile,
Snares of evil an' deceit
Shall not trap our cautious feet.*

"Let us have that verse once mo', an' then we'll perceed toe the chorus," the choir-master said. "It is ve'y nice; ve'y satisfactory indeed."

Back through the main doorway of the church, from where he stood, Almanzar could see a little darky boy waiting in the shadow on the sidewalk and watching him. Again Almanzar sang, with the girl. Along in the middle of this second rendition, without interfering with his singing, he drew from his breast pocket, with a flourish, his purple-bordered handkerchief, and wiped his forehead. Promptly he saw the small boy detach himself from the shadows and come in through the door. As the verse ended, the boy called:

“Is Mista’ Hopper Peebles heah?”

Mr. Peebles sprang to his feet, removing his spectacles so as to see better.

“You is wanted, please, suh, to come to the telefoam down at Buffum’s Drug Sto’,” the child shrilled. “Man sent me said it was a impohtant call.”

The divinity student swelled visibly; not often was it given to a member of the A. M. E. Zion Church to be called to a telephone pay station on important business. The small boy disappeared. Mr. Peebles, not waiting to make any arrangements for the future, passed out through the main door behind him.

“We will resoom,” the choir-master said. “Now the chorus, please.”

With ardor and expression, Almanzar joined the girl in the refrain:

*Oh, believe us!
Oh, receive us!
In the peachly gates at last;
How we are yeahnin',
Bran's f'om the buhnin',
All our sin an' guile is past.*

He turned to the girl as the choir-master dismissed the rehearsal.

"Miss Fisk," he said, "I'm sho' glad you is come to town. I trus' you' stay is goin' to be long."

"Oh, yes," she replied. "I'm fixin' to live heah steady; my papa he's come heah to wuk."

Almanzar looked ostentatiously at his gold watch.

"I do d'clar'!" he cried. "Ef we was to hurry, you an' me has got time to see the big picture that's oveh to Gaines' Palace Theayter. I bet it's awful good picture. Name of it is 'A Desperate Destiny.' Soun's like it would be a peach. May I esco't you, Miss Fisk?"

"Why, that would be nice, Mista' Evarts," she hesitated, "but——"

They were already at the door of the church, and a small boy plucked Almanzar's sleeves.

"Gimme nickel," he said, in a stage whisper. And, as Almanzar tried to ignore him and pass on, he raised his voice. "Gimme that otheh nickel, you, or I go

tell him how you did it, an' which way you has went."

Almanzar lost no time in responding. Miss Fisk looked at him curiously as the small boy disappeared.

"Wasn't it funny," she said, "the way Mista' Peebles happen' to get call' away jes' befo' end of choir practice?"

"Funny!" Almanzar echoed, gazing ardently. "Lucky, *I'd* say."

"Do you know, Mista' Evarts, I reckon I'm goin' like San 'Ntonio," she murmured, as they headed briskly toward the theater.

"You kain't help it," he assured her. "Ain't no city *nowheah*, way I figure it, 'at's betteh place to live. I'm goin' try to make it right pleasant foh you, Miss Fisk—right pleasant."

"I could tell 'at, jes' to look at you," she sighed.

Mrs. Farnsworth's mind, which for all her familiarity with racial characteristics had not been entirely at ease since Almanzar's announcement that she was about to lose a good servant after more than three years' training, was set at rest after breakfast the following day.

"Miz Fahnswo'th," he said, "you got two dollahs you saved out on me las' Sat'day. Will you let me have it bimeby, afteh lunch, please, ma'am?"

"All right. What are you going to do with it?"

"I need new shirt an' pair er socks, an' pretty handkerchief I see yest'day down in sto' window."

She went and got him the money at once. After he had stored it away in his pocket, and gone singing about his work, curiosity overcame her.

"I thought you were going to save your money and go to Chicago," she said.

"Mama di'n' want me to go," he replied without hesitation, "an' when I got tuh thinkin' 'bout leavin' you an' Mista' Fahnswo'th, I jes' natchully di'n' want tuh go. I sho' like to wuk foh you, Miz Fahnswo'th. You an' Mista' Fahnswo'th certain'y awful good to me."

"So you didn't find out, after all," Mr. Farnsworth said, when she repeated this conversation to him, that night.

"No," she replied, regretfully. "And I'm afraid I'm never going to."

On his way to keep an engagement with Lucinda, a day or two later, Almanzar stopped for a few moments to visit his mother. She observed, with proper admiration, the new socks and shirt and handkerchief, and added, shrewdly:

"Somebody tellin' me, 'Manzar, you is payin' some 'tention to 'at tall new Fisk girl, f'om Yoakum."

Almanzar grinned complacently.

"Guess you give up 'at idea of goin' Chicago, ain't you?" she said, after a moment.

"Yassum," he said. "No Chicago foh me! I don't wan' to live in no place with the kind o' white folks they got up theah."

"What you mean the kind o' white folks they got up theah, 'Manzar? Is they diff'unt f'om ouah white folks?"

"Mean what I say," Almanzar replied, positively. "They ain't no such kind o' white folks as you an' me 'sociates with, mama. No such kind of white folks er-tall. Miz Selwyn—at's Mista' Fahnswo'th's a'nty—she lives up in Illinoy, an' she tol' me only otheh day, huh own self, 'at white folks up theah ain't regahded as bein' entitle' to any mo' consideration than niggahs."

EPISODE V

THE UNLUCKINESS OF CATS

ALMANZAR EVARTS staggered under three uppercuts of fate in a single week. He lost his girl; he became involved in a matter of church politics and was suspended from the choir; and he was forced into unwilling but intimate association with a family of cats.

The loss of Miss Lucinda Fisk he could have borne with a certain philosophy, although he loved her ardently. He had lost many a sweetheart before and had never had much trouble finding a new one; he was saddened, but something told him he would get over it—in fact, he already had his discriminating eye on another girl.

That the Reverend Isom G. Penniman should forbid singing in the choir until further notice was a much more serious matter, being both a humiliation and an inhibition of joy.

But the cats were the last straw.

Almanzar recognized, in a vague sort of way, that he himself was not altogether without responsibility for the chain of events that lost him the tall, dark-skinned, animated, altogether adorable Lucinda. If the young people had not arranged a sociable at the

church for the colored boys in the new draft army, she never would have met Corporal Roscoe Bundy, who cut Almanzar out. And nobody in the younger A. M. E. Zion social set had been more enthusiastic about getting up the sociable than Almanzar.

Because of his position as one willing to serve but honorably exempted, he proudly occupied a certain prominence as one of the ultra patriots of the church. What more natural, then, than that he should be asked to serve as chairman of the reception committee the night the colored soldiers were entertained? And what should the chairman of a reception committee do if not supervise the introducing of the strangers in uniform to the girls?

It was to be expected that he would use discretion in making these introductions, naturally; such discretion, for instance, as introducing to his own girl, Miss Fisk, only visitors who compared unfavorably with himself—short and thin ones, unpleasantly ugly ones, youths whose embarrassment and self-consciousness advertised them as coming from the country districts. And this discretion, but for the pernicious activity of the Reverend Penniman, would have eliminated Corporal Bundy.

From the first moment Almanzar saw Corporal Bundy, he sensed that he had better keep him and Lucinda apart. The corporal, late of New Orleans,

stood fully six feet, was about his own age, and was unquestionably good-looking. Also he had an ease and assurance that he in no wise attempted to conceal. He had come from a large city and his sophistication was evident; there was even a trifle of condescension in it. Almanzar knew Lucinda. He had won her from Hop Peebles without difficulty, and "easy come, easy go" may refer to other things than money. He proposed to give Corporal Bundy no chance.

This plan might have worked well had Almanzar confined his activities, that night, to those of the reception committee. But a simple entertainment had been provided, and he had consented to sing. An entertainment in the A. M. E. Zion with him not singing would be no entertainment at all, as he saw it. So, at the proper moment, he stood beside the piano, lifted up his voice—and faltered chokily on the closing notes of the refrain as he saw the Reverend Penniman, across the room, in the act of presenting Corporal Bundy to Miss Fisk.

Bundy annexed Lucinda without a moment's hesitation. It is only fair to the grinning corporal to say that Lucinda did not hesitate, either. Under the rule of self-determination of peoples, the annexation could be very adequately justified.

Almanzar responded to an encore without joy, and hastened, his share in the program done, to where Lucinda and the soldier were partaking of refresh-

ments in a corner. Twice he tried to insinuate himself into their interchange of confidences, and twice Bundy patronized him profoundly.

Perspiring more from chagrin than heat, after the second experience, Almanzar passed through the small kitchen where elder sisters of the church were pouring coffee and cutting cake, and through the side door to the open air to think it over. He had no illusions as to what had happened; he had stolen too many girls himself.

He saw himself in a little mirror that hung upon the wall of the kitchen and stopped, unconsciously, as he always did when he passed a mirror, to straighten his purple necktie. He had been greatly pleased with his appearance the last time he had seen himself in a glass. Now he scowled at the reflection. What did it profit a man, he thought, to wear the finest shirt, the brightest tie, and the best-fitting suit of stylish clothes at a reception, if his girl could be captured by a person in a shiny, ill-fitting uniform of cotton O. D.? The experience was very unpleasant. Almanzar was learning something that many other men have learned about the wizardry of military habiliments.

He was bitter toward the Reverend Isom G. Penniman. "Ol' grapy-haided buttinsky!" he muttered, as he turned from the mirror, the unusual phrase having reference to the blob-like knots in which the preach-

er's inch-long hair persisted in curling. He passed out to the street.

Another visitor at the reception had preceded him and stood leaning against the door jamb. He spoke to Almanzar.

"Rather silly, isn't it?" he said. "Making an awful fuss about those soldiers. Kind of tiresome."

Almanzar recognized the speaker as a man of advanced middle age—forty or more—who had recently come to San Antonio from "up No'th, somewheres," which meant anywhere between Dallas and Alaska.

This newcomer was a light man, with a straight nose and grayish tints in his eyes, and he wore nose glasses. On general principles, Almanzar disliked all colored men who had noses that could hold glasses; this man he also did not care for because he did not speak like any other Afro-Americans of his acquaintance. He did not even speak like white folks, as Almanzar knew them.

There had been much quiet and desultory talk in church circles about Mr. Hutton; some of them called him "Puffessuh" Hutton, perhaps out of appreciation of the fact that he did not speak their dialect, although if he was or had been a school teacher he had not mentioned it. Neither had he announced his trade or touched upon what business brought him to their city. There was considerable speculation as to why he had come. They also had not failed to note

that he seldom entered into a conversation without shifting it, quite smoothly, into a discussion of a certain race riot that had taken place in the State, as a result of which colored soldiers had suffered the extreme penalty for mutiny and murder. And that the moral of his remarks on the subject invariably seemed to be an intangible defense of the negroes who had been guilty.

If members of the African M. E. Zion Church had understood the meaning of the word, they would have been justified in wondering if Mr. Hutton had not arrived in their midst in the interest of some sort of "propaganda."

Almanzar, in deference to age, merely replied, "Yassuh," to the other's seemingly idle comments. This encouraged Mr. Hutton.

"We don't learn anything, some of us colored people," he said. "You'd think, to see those young men inside there in their uniforms, that they were proud of being in the army. Proud to go into this war for the white people—and then perhaps get hanged, if they even ask to be treated half-way right!"

"Yassuh," said Almanzar again, and turned back into the church. He hadn't come out to gossip about racial problems, but to get over the shock of having his girl stolen while he sang. He had not even especially noticed what Hutton said; his apparent agree-

ment meant nothing whatever except that it was the easiest possible reply to make.

He went in, and from a point of vantage glowered at Lucinda and her acquisition. He did no more work as chairman of the reception committee, an omission, everybody having already met everybody else, that no one noticed. In due time he saw Corporal Bundy leave the church with Lucinda, on his way to see her home. If Lucinda even remembered there was such a person as Almanzar Evarts, she gave no sign of it.

Almanzar jammed on his hat and followed them at a discreet distance. He had no clear reason for doing this. Once, as he noted how tightly the corporal held Lucinda's arm and how she snuggled up to him, a red wave of rage surged over him and he meditated meeting Bundy after he had left the girl and testing which of them was the better man physically. This impulse faded quickly. He wasn't sure that fighting with a soldier was not a more serious offense than ordinary fighting. Also he thought the soldier might have a pistol somewhere in his clothes.

He saw them arrive at Lucinda's house and take seats on the gallery. Bundy took the chair Almanzar had been occupying of late, *his* chair, he bitterly told himself. There was nothing to wait for; he turned slowly and sadly away.

Childlike projects of revenge passed through his

mind, to be dwelt upon fondly and discarded one by one as impracticable. He came around a corner and discerned two figures approaching, under a distant street light. They were walking slowly, in earnest conversation. He recognized them afar off as the Reverend Penniman and the new yellow man, "Puffessuh" Hutton. Without knowing why he did it or especially realizing that he did do it, he slipped into the shadow of a high fence to let them pass.

Except for them, the street was deserted, and they were not cognizant of how clearly their voices carried. Thus it was that Almanzar heard most of their conversation from the time they arrived within fifty feet of his place of concealment.

The first words that came to him spoken by the pastor, had little meaning:

"I agree with you in principle, Bruh Hutton, puffec'ly. But don' you think maybe it's dange'ous?"

"How could it be dangerous, if we use good judgment?" Hutton replied, smoothly. "You believe, don't you, that we ought to emphasize the solidarity of the colored race?"

Almanzar didn't know what this meant, and he suspected, from the hesitating way in which the Reverend Penniman said, "Certain'y, Bruh Hutton; certain'y," that the preacher didn't, either.

"Now is our time to stick together," the mysterious person from up North said earnestly. "We shall

never achieve equality until we insist upon it. If we convince the government now that there are millions of us, and that we must be considered—just as the working people of European countries are forcing their governments to consider them—we shall take a long step forward.”

“I expec’ that’s so,” replied the Reverend Penniman. “I expec’ that’s so. But——”

“There aren’t any buts. My message is from the colored people of the North. Now is the time.”

“I mus’ say,” the preacher still objected, “that us cullud people are treated ve’y considerably in this—ah—community. We have ouah own schools, with cullud teachehs, *an’* principals. We have equal ’commodations in the street cyahs.”

The yellow man exclaimed impatiently.

“It isn’t *equal* accommodations we ought to have!” he cried. “It’s the *same* accommodations. Until we have *perfect* equality——” He broke off, as he realized he was not convincing his companion. “Listen, doctor,” he said, impressively, and they stopped, almost within arm’s length of Almanzar, who sensed the swelling chest of the Reverend Penniman at the unfamiliar title. “There is no need of abstract discussion. Here is the point of the whole matter, as it especially interests you. Our people read the *Beacon Light*, all of them. Don’t they?”

“All that can read does, maybe.”

"Precisely. It is the leading colored newspaper. Now you have great influence with the *Beacon Light*, doctor. If you were given things that ought to be printed—things that would help your congregation and all your people—despatches, let us say, telling how the colored men and women are getting together in other places—editorials—letters to the editor—you could get them in."

"I sho' could," the preacher complacently agreed.

"It would be worth—er—twenty-five dollars a week," Mr. Hutton told him. "That's as much again as your present salary. And you could give up that life insurance business that you have on the side—at least you wouldn't have to work so hard at it unless you wanted to. And it would all be in perfect confidence. Not a soul would ever know it."

The Reverend Penniman swayed to the urge of the tempter.

"I s'pose it would all be foh the good of ouah people," he hesitated, weakly. They resumed their walk.

"Of course it would," Hutton agreed. "You understand I have already been able to get a few things in the *Beacon Light*. That letter in this week's issue signed 'An Ohio Colored Soldier's Wife' was, if I may say so in confidence, from my pen. But with your assistance, from now on——"

They passed out of hearing.

Almanzar tried to make out exactly what they were

talking about. One thing was clear. In some fashion, the minister's income was going to be doubled, secretly. And the Reverend Penniman had gone out of his way to introduce Corporal Bundy to Lucinda, while he was singing.

"Ol' grapy-haided buttinsky!" he repeated, liking the sound of the epithet. There was a chance his father and mother would not be in bed, and he started briskly for their house, not far away. His father, being a steward in the A. M. E. Zion, ought to know about this at once.

His mother was asleep, but his father was sitting in the kitchen with his shoes off, laboriously studying a Sunday-school lesson sheet. He laid it aside and listened to the story Almanzar had to tell.

It was not a very coherent story, and it missed a number of essentials, but it included the arguments that the new man from up North had made about perfect equality in the street cars and the fact that he had offered the preacher twenty-five dollars a week to get something or other printed in the *Beacon Light*.

The elder Evarts weighed the evidence solemnly.

"This is a considerable serious matteh, 'Manzar,'" he said. "I ain't goin' foh toe give no decision on it toenight. It's gotta be thought out serious."

"Is it right us cullud folks ought to be fixin' to stir up trouble with white folks, papa?"

"Nossuh!" his father declared, positively. "Ain't nothin' to be gain' by 'at, neveh! I seen cullud folks staht ruckusses with w'ite folks, in my day an' time, an' I neveh yet see one 'at w'ite folks di'n' finish. Nossuh! They ain't no sense in it—no sense er-tall. An' 'en again, cullud folks get treated good in this town. W'ite folks heah—kind o' w'ite folks you an' me 'sociates with—they treats us good, day in *an'* day out. Ain't I wuk in one place twenty-two yeahs? Ain't I got good raises eve'y li'l' w'ile? Ain't my w'ite folks always tek caih me w'en I'm sick, an' look out foh us w'en I got sickness in fam'ly? Ain't you got good w'ite folks, too, 'Manzar? Don't 'at Mista' an' Miz Fahnswo'th treat you lak good cullud folks ought to be treated? Answer me 'at, 'Manzar."

"I ain't say they didn't," Almanzar protested. "I'm only tellin' you what thisyer Puffessuh Hutton says to the rev'ren'."

The elder Evarts nodded judicially. "Sho'ly," he said, although as a matter of fact he had momentarily lost track of the point. "Sho'ly. 'At's w'at I'm tellin' you, 'Manzar. Kain't put no truck in w'at theseyer strangers f'om up No'th says. Never see one of 'em, all the bawn days of my life, 'at had eveh 'sociated with quality."

Almanzar, who did not read the *Beacon Light* regularly, sought information as to the letter that had appeared in it, signed "An Ohio Colored Soldier's

Wife." His father found the paper and Almanzar read the communication aloud.

It was worded quite guardedly, but its tone was not such as to assist in the continuance of pleasant relations between the races. When the reading was finished, Almanzar's father spoke with ponderous decision:

"You leave all this toe me, 'Manzar. I shall tek the matteh up with the rev'ren' himself in the mawnin'. Hit's my dooty as stooward. Way I see it, he aint' got no business doin' this, nossuh. None er-tall. You leave it toe me, 'Manzar."

So the elder Evarts, getting two hours off the next day from the establishment where he was employed as porter, interviewed the Reverend Penniman, who flatly denied the whole matter. The steward, being neither agile of mind nor possessing tact, told him, before they were through, just where he got his information. Whereupon the preacher sent for Brother Hutton, who also flatly denied it.

Steward Evarts left the minister and returned to his work, stubbornly unconvinced but puzzled. The thing hadn't come out as he had intended it should, at all. He had meant to reprove the rev'ren', and the rev'ren' had reproved him.

Choir rehearsal was that night, and the Reverend Penniman, appearing unexpectedly just before it began, severely announced the suspension, "ontwel fur-

ther notice," of Almanzar. He implied, without stating what had happened, that Almanzar had been guilty of an untruthfulness that unfitted him for further association with the good people of the church until he should have purged his sin by fasting, prayer, and good works.

It was on the following Monday morning that the incident of the cats took place. The Farnsworths, who knew nothing whatever about the other tragedies of Almanzar's week, were made aware of this one very promptly.

Mr. Farnsworth looked up from his newspaper at the breakfast table to suggest that another piece of wood be put in the fireplace. Mrs. Farnsworth rang the table bell and passed the suggestion on to Almanzar. He appeared, a few moments later, visibly excited, without the wood.

"I jes' natchully kain't get 'at wood, Miz Fahnswo'th," he panted. "'At woodshed's full o' cats!"

"Cats!" Mrs. Farnsworth echoed, uncomprehendingly. "Full of—— What's the matter with you, Almanzar?"

"Yassum," he insisted, talking rapidly. "Lots o' cats. Li'l' ones. Hunderds of 'em. I wouldn' go in 'at woodshed, Miz Fahnswo'th, foh a million dollahs. They're *crawlin'*."

"You mean there are some new kittens there?"

"No, m'am. Not *new* kittens. Mus' be three fo'

weeks ol'. I d'clar' t' goodness, Miz Fahnswo'th, I di'n' know there was a kitten in 'at woodshed. Heah I been goin' in theah right erlong, an' I might 've put my hand bang right down on one of 'em. Belong to 'at ol' green-eyed tramp cat 'at hangs eroun' ouah yahd. She's in theah, too. Lawdy, Miz Fahnswo'th! I nev' was so outdone in my life! They're *crawlin'!*"

One moment Mrs. Farnsworth surveyed him, while Mr. Farnsworth read his paper as though he had not heard. Then she said, calmly:

"All right, Almanzar; we'll see what we can do, by and by. In the meantime isn't there some wood back of the stove in the den that you can use for the fireplace?"

"Yassum," he agreed with alacrity, and went to get it.

When he had replenished the fire and was out of hearing in the kitchen, Mr. Farnsworth looked up with a grin of understanding.

"If he had put his hand on one of them, the yells of the tortured populace could have been heard for many blocks," he said.

"You have to arrange to get rid of them somehow, Fred," his wife replied. "He can't be made to, and I don't know any better way of smashing discipline than to try to make him do something that I can't."

"I'll see about getting another boy, or a Mexican,

perhaps," Mr. Farnsworth said, and returned to his paper.

Mrs. Selwyn was both curious and indignant.

"Why, I never heard of such a thing!" she exclaimed. "What does he think the cats will do? Scratch him?"

"Cats are Almanzar's especial hoodoo," Mrs. Farnsworth explained, tolerantly. "He is more afraid of them than you would be of a rattlesnake. It isn't that he thinks they would do anything to him, as near as I can make out, but some idea that it would be the worst of luck to touch one." She smiled reminiscently. "There was a poor old sick cat out on our gallery, the first year he worked here, and I insisted that he remove it—and he did, after which he assured me he would never do it again. I happened to come along just as he was completing the job. He got the fireplace tongs, and threw the poor thing over the fence into the next yard. And he was green-complexioned afterwards, and shivered."

"Superstitious nonsense!" sniffed Mrs. Selwyn.

"Righto, auntie!" Mr. Farnsworth put in, cheerily. "But which is better—to coddle a boy's pet superstition a little, or lose a good servant? A hoodoo is a perfectly real thing to him, you know."

"It oughtn't to be. Can't you tell him it is all foolishness?"

"Sure, we could. And he would say, 'Yassuh,'

with perfect agreement. But he wouldn't touch any cats."

His eye fell on a news story in the paper. "Hello!" he said. "That German propaganda that we heard about among the darkies in Alabama has reached here."

He explained, to Mrs. Selwyn:

"With their usual lack of understanding of all other people except Germans, the kaiserbund has been trying to get the negroes of some of the Southern States to start trouble with the whites. The idea, I suppose, being like their idea in fomenting the Mexican border troubles that they have been back of—to give the United States something else to think of besides Europe."

"What has happened here?" Mrs. Farnsworth asked.

"The secret service people made a couple of arrests, last night." He consulted the news columns again, to make sure of his names. "Arrested a negro man named Hutton—Douglass Hutton—and the editor of a colored newspaper called the *Beacon Light*. They are charged with attempting to obstruct the prosecution of the war by arousing race feeling. No details given. It says there are believed to be other negroes in this city who have participated in the scheme, and that more arrests may be made. And the *Beacon Light* has ceased to shine. This Hutton, it says, came

originally from Buffalo, and has been up to the same tricks before, but they were never able to quite get the goods on him. I gather Uncle Sam has been laying for him for some time."

The clock chimed, and he folded his paper hurriedly. "I'll have to get along," he said. "Got a busy day at the office; I didn't realize how late it was getting."

From a position of vantage in the little butler's pantry that connected the kitchen and dining room, Almanzar's sharp ears had caught the word "darkies," and by listening alertly, close to the crack of the closed swing door, he had overheard enough, here and there, to understand who had been arrested and, in an ill-defined way, why. He tiptoed back into the kitchen, where he began to sing gently to himself, while his mind reviewed this news. He could have given Mr. Farnsworth very accurate information as to at least one other colored man involved in this plot, and that man one whom he earnestly hated, but such a thought, of course, never even occurred to him.

It was two or three hours later, when he drifted into the den to do a little postponed dusting, that Mrs. Selwyn, upon whose orderly Illinois mind the incident of the kittens had made a considerable impression, spoke to him about it. She would not have done so, probably, had Mrs. Farnsworth not been in another part of the house. It wasn't exactly that she wanted

to interfere with her niece-in-law's discipline, but rather that she felt it sinful, in a way, not to do what she could to lead the ignorant into more intelligent lines of thought.

"Almanzar," she said. "What was that I heard you saying about not touching cats? You aren't really afraid of cats, are you? What do you think they will do to you?"

He looked a bit uncomfortable, principally because he sensed a note of criticism in her tone, but he answered frankly:

"Nothin', m'am. That ain't it, Miz Selwyn. Cats is jes' my bad luck, 'at's all. Some things is some folks' bad luck, and some things is other folks'. Mine is cats." He literally shuddered. "Jes' natchully kain't touch 'em. Ugh!"

"But what would they do to you if you did touch them?"

"I don' know. Ain't eveh goin' to try an' find out, not ef I kin help it, no, m'am. Always been that-away, Miz Selwyn, eveh sence I was a baby. I wasn' but fo' five days ol', way my mama tol' me, befo' they found out cats was my bad luck. All my life, eveh sence I could talk, I've known it. Yassum."

"They found out? Who found out?" persisted Mr. Farnsworth's aunt.

"Lady 'at come call on my mama when I was fo' five days ol'. Cullud lady, friend o' gramma's. Ol'-

timey cullud lady, she was, with a *power*. An' she says to mama that to this chile cats is always goin' to be his wors' luck. He mustn' eveh touch 'em, she says. Mama says she nev' knew 'at ol' cullud lady to have anything of that kind wrong. She's daid now, years ago, 'at ol' lady is, but she had a wonderful power."

Mrs. Farnsworth, in Mrs. Selwyn's place, would have said something meaningless, or nothing at all. Not so Mrs. Selwyn, who saw a duty to perform.

"Goodness me!" she exclaimed, in unaffected horror. "You don't believe all that nonsense, do you?"

Almanzar straightened up and withdrew completely into himself. "Sometimes you kain't tell what to b'lieve," he said, dodging the issue as well as might be. "Some says one thing an' some says another."

"But you—— Why, Almanzar, you oughtn't to be as superstitious as that. You've been to public school. You read. You belong to the Christian Church."

"No, ma'am," he corrected, promptly. "A. M. E. Zion."

He had never heard the term "Christian Church" spoken except as the name of a denomination, and she, coming from a community where the sect had no organization, had never used the phrase except in its broader sense, so neither of them understood what the

other meant, and she gasped at the ignorance of religious essentials that she mistakenly thought his answer implied.

"But it is superstitious!" she cried. "And your church doesn't believe in superstition. If you would read in the Bible about the Witch of Endor——"

But Almanzar had no desire to hear about witches or anything else. His sole idea, now, was to depart from this white lady who scoffed at the things he knew were so. Remarking that he had something on the stove he would have to look after, he went away. In the kitchen Mrs. Farnsworth came upon him, not long after, going quietly about the business of getting lunch and humming thoughtfully to himself.

"Miz Fahnswo'th," he began, as she finished her errand and was turning to leave. "Mista' Fahnswo'th's a'nty, she don' know much about cullud folks, does she?"

His mistress, in the dark as to whither this might lead, replied with caution:

"There aren't many colored people up where she lives, you know. Why?"

"She don' know about cullud folks sometimes havin' a *power*, does she? She ain't neveh heard about the ol'-timey cullud folks that came from Africa, and had a power."

"Why—I suppose not. Why do you ask?"

"Nothin' much, m'am. I was jes' tellin' huh about the lady with the power 'at done tol' my mama about me havin' to be careful erbout cats, when I was a li'l' boy, an' Miz Selwyn she done tol' me I was sup'stitious. I tol' you about that one time, Miz Fahnswo'th, an' *you* di'n' tell me I was sup'stitious. An' it *ain't* bein' sup'stitious, Miz Fahnswo'th. It's jes' takin' good caih o' myself."

Mrs. Farnsworth shook her head gravely and made the same non-committal reply with which she usually greeted his rare confidences as to weird details of ancient African belief:

"There are a great many things in this world that we don't all understand about."

She hastened to change the subject before she got into deeper water than she wanted to, and the sight of his hymnbook on a table reminded her of a matter, now nearly twenty-four hours old, that had aroused her curiosity.

"You got home from church very early yesterday. Did services close earlier than usual?"

He answered without hesitation:

"I di'n' go to chuhch yes'day, Miz Fahnswo'th."

"You didn't? But I thought you always wanted to sing in the choir."

"No, m'am. I ain't goin' sing in 'at choir no mo', not ontwel 'ey gets a diff'ent preacheh."

"Why, I didn't know you were having any trouble

with your preacher. What's the matter with him?"

Almanzar spoke with fluent heat. "I don' like him!" he exclaimed. "O! meriny-cullud grapy-haid!"

"That's a new word to me," she said. "What does 'meriny' mean?"

"Sort o' punkin-cullud."

"How do you spell it?"

He shook his head, at a loss.

"I reckon maybe it ain't a word you spell, Miz Fahnswo'th," he said. "You jes' say it."

She concealed the twinkle she knew must be in her eye by looking out of the window, meantime storing this new one away in her mind for Mr. Farnsworth's edification. "But what has the preacher done to get you so down on him?" she asked.

"Goin' eroun' makin' folks take out life insu'ance!" he exclaimed, with fine indignation. It was not within the bounds of propriety that he should tell the *real* reason for the schism between him and the Reverend Penniman, but that need not prevent him from giving voice to his disapproval and dislike. "Goin' eroun' makin' folks take life insu'ance, when he oughta be visitin' the po' *an'* needy. Miz Fahnswo'th, don' you think when a rev'ren' gets a hunderd dollahs a month, that ought to be enough foh him without pesterin' folks erbout life insu'ance?"

"A hundred dollars a month is quite a lot of money," she hedged. "Does he really get it?"

"'At's what he's s'posed to get, an' he *does* get a lot of it—all he kin c'lect."

Mrs. Farnsworth replied inconsequentially and made a hurried exit.

As she moved toward her own room she thought for a moment she would mention the matter of ingrained negro superstitions to Mrs. Selwyn, but in the same thought decided not to. It was too late. What was done, was done. Almanzar, having found the old lady from Illinois to be one of those who do not understand certain things, would never again, so long as he lived, refer to any purely racial tradition or belief in his conversations with her. She had definitely closed the door to his confidences. The incident was ended.

When Mr. Farnsworth came home, late in the afternoon, his wife took up with him at once the inconveniences that might arise from having a servant and a woodshed which did not coördinate.

"Never once thought of it since morning," he sighed. "Well, I suppose I'd better go look after it right now. I don't know where to get anybody to move those cats, and I certainly don't propose to do it myself. I think I'll go consult Almanzar."

He stepped out across the back gallery into the yard and glanced into the woodshed. Almanzar had

used the right word to describe the activities of the awkward, scrawny, shabby six kittens which were in sight, guarded by a torn-eared mother which spat at him. They were crawling.

He called to Almanzar, who came out of his little house.

"I was thinking," Mr. Farnsworth said, seriously, "that you might know some colored boy who doesn't mind handling cats that you could get to pick this outfit up and put them in a sack and carry them over and dump them in the river. I suppose——" He paused as though considering deeply. "I suppose I would be willing to pay two bits to the right boy."

"I know one, yassuh," Almanzar declared, without hesitation. "Lives right oveh on nex' street. I could go get him right afteh dinneh, Mista' Fahnswo'th. Could we have 'at ol' gunnysack 'at's on the back gallery, suh?"

"Yes," his employer agreed. "And do it as soon as you get time, because we might want some wood in the morning. It doesn't feel now as if we would need any fires tomorrow, but you never can tell. Another little Norther might blow up."

"I kin get a boy foh two bits. Yassuh," said Almanzar.

"He's going to do it," Mr. Farnsworth told his wife, as he settled down on the front gallery with the afternoon paper to await the dinner bell. "He's

going to get another darky to handle them, at a cost of two bits—and I suspect the other boy is going to get approximately ten cents of it.”

Almanzar, after dinner, gained permission to leave his dishes until morning, and hastened from the yard, returning, presently, with a half-grown negro youth whose pet superstitions, whatever they might be, obviously had nothing to do with cats. It took the newcomer about two minutes to gather up the squeaking kittens and thrust them into the burlap bag, while Almanzar stood well in the background and bossed the job with authority. The other boy was so filled with the spirit of the chase that he proposed hunting up the mother cat and putting her in, too, but Almanzar vetoed this.

Darkness was falling as the two negroes went out of the yard together, Almanzar still giving directions and his companion carrying the bag. Almanzar had collected the agreed price for the deed from Mr. Farnsworth, but not in the presence of his assistant.

Two blocks from the Farnsworth house the handy helper suggested that the time had come for a division of the spoils. Mr. Farnsworth had thoughtfully made payment in small change, to save Almanzar embarrassment, and Almanzar produced a nickel and gave it to the other, declaring that Mr. Farnsworth had given him but ten cents.

The assistant pocketed the five cents and demanded more. He maintained with reason and some heat that he did not believe Mr. Farnsworth was a piker, and that he insisted upon having at least half. They quarreled picturesquely, while the squirming burlap bag lay at their feet. The helper finally made off, thinking Almanzar would call him back, but Almanzar didn't. He was willing to handle cats in a burlap bag, where he couldn't touch them. After his companion had quite vanished, he picked up the sack gingerly, holding it well away from his leg, and continued on his errand.

But he no longer went toward the river. Nobody could have made him drown those kittens. He had a better idea.

After covering some distance, he came to a little suburban block of stores, one of which had a soda counter for negroes. Through the window his eyes fell upon a sight that gladdened them. Miss Clara Little stood near the counter, with two other colored young people—George Merdle and Miss Lily Bland, who was George's fiancée.

Miss Clara Little was slim and light, and attractively girlish. A very quiet girl, too, and for a long time most of Almanzar's girls had been vivacious. He had been considering the conquest of Miss Little for several days, ever since being bereaved by Corporal Bundy's theft. This fortuitous meeting, when he had

twenty cents in his pocket with which to buy sodas, was nothing short of providential.

He slipped around the corner and dropped the bag of cats in the alley back of the block, intending to return for it later.

The Reverend Isom G. Penniman, chancing at that moment to come down the side street on business of his own, saw a colored man bearing a bag dart into a shadow and hide it. It was dark and he did not recognize Almanzar, but, on general principles, a bag surreptitiously hidden by a colored youth might be expected to contain some sort of loot, and the Reverend Penniman sneaked across the street and got it with emotions so mixed that he himself could not have defined them. He just meant to take the bag somewhere into the light and see what was in it; beyond that his plans did not go. Perhaps, then, he would notify the police; that remained to be determined.

He came out of the alley with the bag, in which the kittens, having dined just before their capture, had gone to sleep and were not yet sufficiently awakened to squirm again, just in time to see, coming across the street toward him, two plain-clothes policemen.

These officers had been seeking a darky, resident in that neighborhood, who had stolen a bicycle. From their place of concealment they had seen Almanzar drop the bag in the alley and hurry away. They had

seen the older negro come at once and get it—presumably a confederate of the first, to whom the spoils of some raid were being passed—and they were waiting for him.

The Reverend Penniman knew one of the detectives by sight, and he saw they were both looking at him and coming toward him. He dropped the bag and ran like the wind. One of them dashed after him, shouting to the other to follow the negro who had had the sack first. The bag, temporarily neglected, lay where it fell, and the shabby kittens, perhaps wondering if this night's shabby journeyings and bumpings were never coming to an end, awoke, protested briefly, curled up, and again slept.

Almanzar, relieved of the bag, and having no knowledge of the presence in the vicinity of either the Reverend Penniman or the detectives, hastened back around the corner of the block toward the drug store. He passed a small fruit stand conducted by a Greek, who at that exact moment happened to spill on the floor some peanuts he was packing into little paper bags, and stooped to recover them.

Almanzar was not a thief, but he had an old feud with this Greek, who had once short-changed him five cents, secure in the confidence that a colored boy's word would probably not be taken against his in a matter of money, as regards which negroes notoriously were not expected to think straight. Knowing this as

well as the fruit vendor, Almanzar, on that occasion, had stood the short-changing with only an oral protest, but had hoped for revenge. Now, as the Greek stooped to salvage the peanuts, and thus for a second lost sight of the stacks of polished fruit outside his stand, Almanzar deftly annexed two oranges, without slowing his steps or even seeming to cast his eyes in the Hellenic person's direction. He had no feeling that he had stolen anything, although he knew the law might disagree with him. Morally, he had merely wiped the slate of an ancient wrong.

Into the drug store he turned, with beaming face and lifted hat.

"Well, I d'clar'!" he cried. "Ain' this nice to fin' you-all in heah! Howdy-do, Miss Bland. Howdy-do, Miss Li'l'. Say, George, do you reckon you-all could drink another soda?"

He beamed ravishingly on Miss Little, who smiled back at him, as most colored girls did when he put himself out to make them. Quietly she said—because he was looking at her, although he addressed George Merdle—that she would greatly be pleased to enjoy another soda, thank'y, suh, Mista' Evarts, and Almanzar ordered a round and produced his twenty cents with a flourish.

When they had finished drinking, he gave each of the girls an orange. Learning that the three were

on their way to a picture show, he expressed regrets that a pressing engagement made it impossible for him to accompany them, and made private opportunity to ask Miss Little what she expected to be doing the following evening.

It developed, after a moment's conversation in whispers, that she was going to a movie with him.

Almanzar went with George and the two girls to the street car; then set forth blithely on the back trail to recover his bag of cats.

In the meantime the plain-clothes man, seeking one lone colored boy, had seen two through the drug store window, and had been puzzled and afraid of arresting the wrong man, and he had been waiting outside for his partner to return to assist him in the identification. When the four went away, he strolled behind them. Almanzar, in saying good night as the car approached, remarked loudly that it was certainly his good fortune that he happened to come into that drug store just when he did, and the detective, knowing now which was the right one, waited until the others had boarded the car, and then grabbed Almanzar with a fervor that startled him into absolute paralysis of speech.

The detective mentioned briefly that he was wanted for stealing. Almanzar took no trouble to deny this, but cursed himself for having thought he could outwit a Greek. He was glad the oranges were no longer in

his pockets, although he doubted if this made much difference.

They started to walk toward the nearest patrol signal box, which was quite a bit nearer the heart of the city, Almanzar going peaceably if not calmly. He was wondering how he could get word to Mr. Farnsworth. The officer assisted in the solution of this problem by turning into the street on which was located the Farnsworth home.

"Please, suh," Almanzar said, softly, "will you please let me stop at my house an' tell the gen'leman I wuk foh 'at I done got arrested? It's the secon' house f'om heah, on this side of the street."

"Who is it you work for?" the detective countered.

"Mista' Frederick Fahnswo'th, suh."

A distinct note of respect came into the policeman's voice.

"Why, yes, I reckon so," he said. "But don't you try to make no getaway, nigger!"

The little early-winter Norther that had brought the fireplace into use that morning had blown itself completely out, and in the balmy air that had succeeded it the Farnsworths, with Mrs. Selwyn, were sitting on their front gallery. Two figures came along the sidewalk, paused before the house, and they heard Almanzar say: "Mista' Fahnswo'th's sittin' right theah on the gallery, suh."

The figures turned up the walk.

"This Mr. Farnsworth?" asked the white man with Almanzar. "My name is MacQueen; I'm an officer from headquarters. This boy says he works for you."

Mr. Farnsworth switched on the electric lights under the gallery roof. "What have you been doing, Almanzar?" he demanded.

"Got arrested," Almanzar replied, simply.

"I know. But what did you do?"

"Nothin', suh."

"He's arrested on suspicion of stealing," Detective MacQueen said. Almanzar held his peace. This was a matter for white folks to discuss, and he felt great confidence in Mr. Farnsworth.

"I'm sorry," Mr. Farnsworth said. "I suppose you're sure about it, but I'm a little surprised. He's worked for me nearly four years, and he's a pretty good boy. You've had him down to the station a few times, but never for anything more serious than fighting. Fighting over girls, mostly. What did he steal?"

The officer hesitated.

"Well, to tell you the truth, I don't exactly know, suh," he confessed, "but it shore looks like he stole it, all right. It was like this: My pardner and me saw this boy with a sack, and he sneaked into an alley and hid it, and another nigger that was waitin' sneaked in as soon as he had gone and got it, and when we

confronted this other nigger, my pardner and me, he dropped it and run. It was in that little darky neighborhood just this side of the new Mexican section, back yonder. It was up to my pardner to get the other feller and find out what was in the sack. I'll know when we get to the station."

Mr. Farnsworth smiled. "Perhaps it isn't as bad as it looks, officer," he said, "although nobody could expect you to do any different from what you did. Was it the same sack you had when you left here, Almanzar?"

"Yassuh." Almanzar's voice was entirely cheerful. There was nothing more to worry about; no mention whatever had been made of oranges.

"But what were you doing over there? That isn't on the way to the river."

"Nossuh. You see, Mista' Fahnswo'th, it was this-away." The servant was no longer even embarrassed over the arrest; Mr. Farnsworth was going to get him off, as he always did; there was not even going to be a trip to the police station. "Mo' I thought of it, when I got away f'om heah, mo' I thought you di'n' specially want 'em *drownded*. So I thought maybe I'd take 'em over theah where those Mexicans live, an' tuhn 'em loose. I've always heard say 'at Mexicans *likes* cats."

"Cats!" The detective's voice was startled.

"Kittens," Mr. Farnsworth substituted. "A litter

of them that we found in the woodshed. Almanzar left here with them about three-quarters of an hour ago."

Two more figures came along the street. One, a colored man of middle age, wearing a derby hat beneath which blobs of curly hair kinked with a peculiar bunch-of-grapes effect, was protesting steadily and insistently to an apparently deaf-and-dumb white companion, who stopped and looked toward the Farnsworth house as he saw the figures that stood there in the glare of the gallery lights.

"Come here a minute, Bill!" called Detective MacQueen. "Did you go back and look in the sack?"

"Yes," replied MacQueen's partner, shortly, with no effort to hide the disgust in his voice. "A bunch of little——"

"I know. Cats." MacQueen turned and spoke severely to Almanzar: "I'm going to let you go this time, but you be careful how you run around hiding things and making officers trouble. We'll be watching you."

"Yassuh," said Almanzar. "Thanky', suh."

The Reverend Isom G. Penniman now stood within six feet of Almanzar, but neither of them indicated by the slightest flicker of an eyelash that he had ever seen the other before.

"Say," said the detective who was escorting the

minister, "who do you s'pose this nigger is? He's the guy that the Federal boys asked us to look out for last night—the nigger that's been mixed up in that *Beacon Light* case. You remember the cap'n told us the secret service men knew some local nigger was mixed up in it, but they hadn't been able to find out who? Well, when I frisked this feller under a street light after I'd made the pinch, looking to see if he had a gun or razor or anything, I found this piece all written out for the *Beacon Light*. He must have written it before the paper was raided, and kept it in his pocket, like a fool."

"Excuse me, suh. Please, suh," the Reverend Penniman protested. "I didn't write it. I didn't, honest, suh. It was given toe me to—to give toe the editoh."

"That's what the Federal boys said," MacQueen remarked. "They said there was some local nigger acting as a go-between. A preacher! Gee! Pretty good business, Bill! We'll take him down and turn him over to the Gov'ment."

He addressed the Farnsworths. "Hope we didn't make you any trouble over this boy. Tell him, next time he wanders around with cats, not to go hiding 'em in alleys."

Touching their hats, the plain-clothes men went away, the Reverend Penniman, between them, still protesting.

"Well," said Mr. Farnsworth, trying to speak severely, "what have you got to say, Almanzar?"

The boy's eyes were on the back of the disappearing prisoner, and his mind was following a train of thought that, to him, was perfectly coherent and logical. He summed up, in his apparently irrelevant reply, the *quod erat demonstrandum* of his reasonings:

"Cats is sho'ly as unlucky foh the rev'ren' as they is foh me."

.

EPISODE VI

FOR COUNTRY AND CHILLYCLOTH

"THEN up to this awful stylish restaurant wheah hey was havin' supper comes a Texas-cab," Almanzar told Clara Little. Cabs with hurrying clocks not yet being within the San Antonio experience, he had never heard their name spoken, and a certain slowness in reading, combined with his somewhat defective vision, frequently gave him peculiar ideas as to unfamiliar words.

He and Miss Little were sitting upon the gallery of Miss Little's home in one of the smaller colored neighborhoods, and he was enthusiastically recounting the plot of an unusually thrilling motion picture he had witnessed the previous evening. It had escaped his observation that Miss Little was not displaying deep interest, due, perhaps, to a reasonable feeling on her part that it would have been more satisfactory to see the picture herself than to hear it described. True, he had the excuse that she had been obliged to go with her mother to prayer meeting the evening before, but he could not see that this reason for not taking her was entirely adequate; the picture ran for three nights.

"Then they got up f'om the table, an' Chahles Win-

sor Hamilton called foh her cloak, an' they went out an' got into the Texas-cab," he continued. "An' they hadn't more'n got into the park, wheah they wa'n't no houses anywheah eroun', than he begun askin' her again will she marry him. Well, first off she jes' kind o' set back in her corneh an' didn' pay him no 'tention, but afteh awhile she ovehcome her feelin's an' let him hol' her hand. Because she had a scheme to get the secret.

"So her time was kinda took up when the Texas-cab tuhned off f'om the way it ought to go, an' she neveh notice' he was havin' her toted to the headquahtchs of the gang. But all this time Lawrence Rich, the secret service detective, was behine 'em. He come to the stylish restaurant jes' afteh they lef', an' when he found out they had gone he got a motorcycle an' stahted out right smaht to follow 'em. An' as the Texas-cab keeps goin' an' goin', he keeps comin' an' comin', neareh an' neareh behine 'em."

"Wheah did he get a motorcycle, 'Manzar?" Miss Little asked, absent-mindedly.

"Why—right eroun' theah somewheahs," he replied, a trifle annoyed. "Well, Chahles Winsor Hamilton he keeps a-makin' love to Miss Pheeb Crosby, an' she don' notice foh quite awhile 'at they are plumb off the right road."

Almanzar's rendition of the heroine's Christian name represented his attempt to translate into sound

another unfamiliar combination of letters, he never having met or heard of any lady named Phœbe.

"But by an' by Miss Pheeb Crosby she gets sup'stitious an' she looks out o' the window an' she says——"

"Suspicious," corrected Miss Little, who occasionally emphasized her superior culture, Almanzar having passed only through grammar school while she had been privileged to attend one year at High.

"Some says one an' some says the other," he replied, impatiently. "I usually says it sup'stitious. An' she says to Chahles Winsor Hamilton, 'Take me to my home instantly at once.' But he sort o' laffs an' keeps on a-makin' love, when, whoosh! up side o' that Texas-cab comes Lawrence Rich, the secret service detective, on his motorcycle, an' makes the chauffeur stop, an' sticks a pistol in thoo the window right up against Chahles Winsor Hamilton.

"So he makes him get out an' they talk about one thing an' ernother, an' Chahles Winsor Hamilton tries to pass it off, but Lawrence Rich, the secret service detective, he says, 'You are arrested as a deserter f'om the ahmy,' he says. An' Chahles Winsor Hamilton says, 'I s'pose you are afteh the rewahd they pay foh bringin' deserters back.' But he is jes' sayin' this to gain time, so he kin take a li'l' bottle out of his pocket an' drink it. Then, w'en he has done so, his face goes all—— Did you eveh see 'at pitcher call' 'Jiggle an' Hyde,' Clara?"

"Las' summer. I didn' like it. It didn' have anything funny in it er-tall."

"I don' know," Almanzar responded, judicially. "I couldn' go to say 'at. I mos' busted laffin' w'en 'at ol' Hyde couldn't get no mo' medicine to change hisself back into Jiggle. Well, what I was goin' to say was 'at this Chahles Winsor Hamilton, when he had swallowed this bottle, his face all kinda twisted up like 'at ol' Mista' Hyde, an' his hair come down, long an' black, oveh his face, an'——"

"Did you *evah* see nicer hair than Mista' Doxey's got?" Miss Little interrupted, dreamily. "It kin come right down in his eyes."

Almanzar was distinctly irritated. He and Clara Little had been engaged for four months, which was a record length of time for him to be engaged to any girl, and more than once, lately, he had been conscious of a growing tendency on her part toward incomplete attention and irrelevant side remarks.

He was confused, now, as well as annoyed.

"Mista' Doxey?" he repeated. "I don't guess maybe I've *evah* seen him. What pitcher was he at?"

"Not any pitcher. I don't mean some actor, 'Manzar. I was thinkin' of Mista' William Doxey, down to the chuhch. Ain't you ever notice' his hair?"

Almanzar *had* noticed Mr. Doxey's hair. Often, with feelings of envy. His own hair was far from

kinky and would easily grow three inches long, and by keeping it tightly bound in a turban during most of his working hours he succeeded in getting an effect during his appearances in public that might have been described as "somewhat wavy"—if you weren't too particular about word-values. But young Mr. Doxey was a very light person, whose hair was almost Caucasian in texture. Almanzar's reply was scornful:

"Huh! His hair *ought* to be straight, f'om all I heah. Know what he does? Irons it with a hot flat-iron jes' befo' he goes to chuhch or sociables. One time, so a boy told me 'at lives up his way, 'at Bill Doxey got the flat too hot an' sco'ched his haid so he had to stay home most a week. Easy ernuff to get straight hair ef you want to sco'ch you' haid!"

Much of this seemed to have passed Miss Little by. "How come it, 'Manzar," she asked, following out her own line of thought. "How come nobody eveh see 'at Mista' Doxey except at chuhch an' sociables? I don' know *when* I've eveh seen him anywheahs else."

"'At Bill Doxey," Almanzar replied, with the finality of an arbiter of elegance, "don' go out in society because he don' know *how*. 'At Bill Doxey he ain' got no social standin' whateveh."

"He dresses stylish," she maintained stubbornly. "He sho' had a pretty Palm Beach soot on at chuhch, las' Sunday."

This was getting unpleasant and called for a positive diversion.

"Palm Beach soots ain't as much style as they use' to be with good dressers," Almanzar declared. "I got a nice Palm Beach, but I ain't put it on. Too early to weah Palm Beach soots, anyway, ef you got any otheh good clothes. Folks don' put on Palm Beach soots in April. Up to now, I don' believe I've seen more'n two three white gen'lemen wearin' Palm Beach soots." Carried away by the sound of his own voice, he added a statement born of the moment: "*I* don't expec' to weah *any* Palm Beach this yeah. Chillycloth is lots mo' stylish. I'm havin' me a soot made of Chillycloth. Wear it soon's it gets wahn ernuff."

The diversion was successful; Clara came open-eyed out of her trance.

"Havin' it *made!*" she exclaimed. "My gracious, 'Manzar! I didn' know you eveh had clothes *made*. Wheah?"

"Radway an' Dunne's," he boasted. "They're Mista' Fahnswo'th's tailors, an' he fixes it foh me."

Her voice was most agreeably awe-stricken. "Chillycloth's mo' expensive than Palm Beach, ain't it? An' at Radway an' Dunne's it must cost a terrible lot."

He answered with infinite airiness:

"'At's er least o' *my* troubles. I got a li'l' money

put by, an' the thing to do with money 'at's put by is to get it once in erwhile an' *spend* it, ain't it? 'At's what you get money put by *fuh*."

Clara's attention was now as concentrated as he could wish. He didn't waste a moment worrying about how he should make good on his boastfulness, and indeed it would have seemed a rather fruitless problem, seeing that Radway & Dunne were the most exclusive tailors in town, with no instalment department, while at the moment his financial resources totaled exactly five cents and he had already drawn all his present week's wages and a part of his next. Sufficient unto the day might be its evils; for the present he had successfully distracted Clara's mind from the contemplation of Bill Doxey and his hair.

"Oh, I know what let's do, 'Manzar!" cried Miss Little. "Let's go on the ride Sunday oveh to Mista' Garrison's. Theah's room foh two moah."

Almanzar's eyes rolled slightly. He had heard about the automobile trip that some of the young people were planning to take the following Sunday to the farm of a prosperous old colored couple named Garrison, some thirty miles from town. Smoke Aldrich, livery chauffeur, was getting it up. His boss had promised to let him have a car for nine dollars, and Smoke was going to drive it himself and take his girl. Three other couples would each pay three dollars and crowd into the tonneau—three on the big

seat, two on the dinky-seats and one on a camp-stool. At the Garrison farm, where city folks always found an enthusiastic welcome, was to be barbecued goat. Delightful!

But three dollars!

"I don' see how I could be absent f'om the choir," he temporized.

"Oh, dear!" Clara sighed. "I thought sho'ly—An' I already tuhned down one invitation to go."

"You say you *did*! Who asked you?"

"Mista' Doxey. He mention' it afteh prayer meetin', las' night, an' o' course I thought you——"

"Maybe I could get off f'om singin'," Almanzar decided. "We'll go. You tell 'em to count us in."

"'Manzar, you sho' are a nice man!" she cried, rapturously. "An' Smoke Aldrich—he's been down theah twice befo', you know—he says ol' Mista' Garrison is fixin' to have a barbecue, anyway, but most always he has fried chicken, too, an' *everything*."

"Did Smoke say when he c'lects the fares?" Almanzar asked, a little later, trying to speak casually.

"Jes' befo' he stahts f'om heah," she said. "He '*specially* mention' 'at."

"Natchully," Almanzar agreed. "Natchully."

Mr. Farnsworth came home early Saturday afternoon, but Mrs. Farnsworth, detained at a war-work committee meeting, did not arrive until nearly dinner time. It was after dinner, out on the front gallery,

while the cheerful clatter of Almanzar's dishes came out faintly to them from the kitchen, that they gained their first opportunity to converse without chance of being overheard.

"I'd been in the house about half an hour today," he said, "and was reading in the den, when I noticed Almanzar prowling about the back yard, looking for something in the grass and ostentatiously registering deep disappointment. He kept it up so long I *had* to ask him; it would have been a shame not to. It developed he had lost half a dollar."

"Did you?" asked Mrs. Farnsworth, laughing quietly.

"Of course. A temporary loan, so stated and understood. Maybe I oughtn't to have fallen for it, but the seriousness with which he hunted for that imaginary four bits—— It seems he might have lost it out on the street, although he thought it was in the yard and that he might find it most any minute. He did good enough acting to earn it. Do you know anything about the emergency that occasioned all this?"

"All about it. I'm glad you let him have it. I've been trying, off and on, ever since noon, to think of a way of doing it without smashing a rule. You didn't notice any of them, I suppose, but the things that boy did this morning—some of them before we were up—warned me perfectly as to what was com-

ing. He had this gallery scrubbed before breakfast, and it was washed two days ago. He cleaned the kitchen and the refrigerator, and picked up the yard, and found time, before lunch, to wash Rufus, and I hadn't told him to do that. Said Rufus had been in a fight last night and got terribly dirty, which was true enough, only nobody would ever expect him to notice it.

"The explanation came, as usual, at lunch time, when I am supposed to be good-natured. Some boys and girls of his acquaintance have engaged an automobile—one of them works in a negro livery garage—and are going, tomorrow, to visit some old darkies that have a farm somewhere out toward Seguin. He wants to go—with a girl, of course. The cost is three dollars a couple."

"So he touched you for enough over what was coming to him tonight to make three dollars."

"That's it. There wasn't anything coming to him tonight, and he had drawn all but two dollars and a half on next week, and I have always made it a rule not to let him get more than a week overdrawn. So I finally stood for an advance of two and a half—after a good deal of discussion, naturally, and a carefully worded half-promise from him that he wouldn't ask for any more before Wednesday—but beyond that I wouldn't budge."

"And two and a half wouldn't do at all; he had to

have three. That comes under the head of cruelty to servants."

"I'm glad he thought of that idea of losing money in the yard; it saves me doing something that might have set a bad precedent. I had about decided to go out into the kitchen, just before he finished his dishes, and tell him I wouldn't let him have any additional advance, but that I had spoken to you about it and that you had agreed to lend him fifty cents, as a personal matter. Of course I was going to fix it somehow; I couldn't let a half-dollar stand between him and this outing, and you know I have been promising him a whole Sunday off ever since Aunt Carrie was here."

"Did you give him the usual fifteen cents for washing the dog?"

"No. I didn't tell him to do it. *That* might get him into the habit of washing him every day."

"I don't believe anything would do that, but, even so, we could stand it if Rufo could. Go on; give it to him. You don't want him to go on that trip with just the money to pay his share of the car and not a single cent over."

Mrs. Farnsworth hesitated. "I wonder if the car could be less than three dollars apiece," she said. "He may already have provided for a margin. It isn't likely, is it? All right. I'll do it." She entered the house and went to the kitchen, whence, presently, she

returned, followed by the sound of Almanzar's voice uplifted in song.

The automobile party, with much shouting and giggling, squeezed out of the car not long after noon in front of the Garrison farmhouse, which stood near a little clump of trees far back from the glaring country road. Old Eph Garrison and Sallie, his wife, beamed a delighted reception. All their children were married and gone, and they liked to have young people around. City young people, especially. They were justifiably proud of the quantity and quality of their hospitality.

Smoke Aldrich, with ceremony, presented those of his companions who had never been there before. Much hand-shaking and excessively polite acknowledgement followed. While they were getting acquainted a young man came out of the house—a stocky youth of medium height, about Almanzar's age. He was the color of a new saddle and almost straight-haired, and would pass for good-looking were it not for his eyes, which were sullen and furtive.

"This is my nephew, folks—Buddy Small," Garrison announced. "Mista' Aldrich, Miss Flood, Mista' Evarts——" He went through the list, while they all greeted Mr. Small effusively. "'En now," he said, hastily, when the introductions were completed, "ef you-all will excuse me, I'll go look at 'at goat. Barbecuin' er goat sho' takes plenty of 'tention.

I expect maybe I been away f'om 'at goat too long already."

They all wanted to see the goat immediately, and went with him. Followed, as they sniffed and exclaimed and squealed admiringly, a lecture on the one and only proper method of barbecuing goat *right*. Eph Garrison conceded that he knew; the secret had come to him from his own grandfather, who had learned it on Colonel Andrew J. Garrison's plantation, before the war, and all the world was aware—or its ignorance was abysmal—that nowhere had there ever been such artistic barbecues as those conducted under the auspices of Colonel Andrew J. Garrison.

The goat in due time arrived at the proper turn for serving, and the young people sat down to dinner. There were also fried chicken, as Smoke had predicted, and candied yams, and stacks of rice-flour biscuits that were more appetizing than most people's wheat-flour product, and hot, strong coffee.

An hour or two later, as the lethargy induced by the feast began to pass, conversation revived. They were all seated out of doors, in the shade of the gallery.

Most naturally the talk promptly turned on the war. One of the visitors, a boy named Charlie Green, was in the draft, away down near the bottom of the list but liable to be called almost any time now; all the others had acquaintances among the colored boys in

the new National army. Rather vague, in the minds of these young people, were the causes of the war, except that they had to do with "freedom"—word of all words with which to conjure the negro imagination—and confused was their understanding of its location, any place more than a hundred miles distant being for most of them too far outside their experience to be comprehended. But they knew, as all South Texas knew, that the claims for exemption on the part of colored selected men in that section had not averaged higher than among the white men drafted, and they were awed and nervous about it all, but proud of doing their share.

"Ef I should get mine," Charlie Green said, after a little, speaking with entire seriousness, "I don't care so much if only they gives me a military fun'ral. A *full* military fun'ral," he amended, "with a band an' shootin' at the grave."

Charlie was not thinking of a funeral in France, or up North somewhere, or even so far away as some distant camp in Texas—Fort Worth or Houston, say. He was visualizing that funeral as being held from his own church in San Antonio, with a procession through East Commerce street. He thought of himself as witnessing it from somewhere, observing with a melancholy satisfaction the trappings of war, the casket on a gun carriage, the girls of the congregation crying and carrying on and remarking to each

other what a brave man Charlie Green was, and his mother in the deepest mourning that ever had been worn in the A. M. E. Zion, the highly distinguished observed of all observers in a most dramatic spectacle.

"They say you always has a military fun'ral," Almanzar put in. "Not always the band, maybe, but shootin' at the grave."

Mr. Buddy Small had not participated in the war conversation; he had, in fact, shown some uneasiness as it progressed. Now he exclaimed:

"My goodness! Let's talk erbout sump'n besides wah. Seems lak eve'ybody eve'wheah kain't talk erbout nothin' but wah, nowadays. Let's sing sump'n."

A proposition to sing could not fail to be received sympathetically by an Afro-American audience.

"'At's a good idea," one of the girls agreed, promptly. "You staht sump'n, Mista' Evarts."

Almanzar seldom had to be asked twice to sing. He responded now, but with more cheerfulness than tact, considering the form of Mr. Small's suggestion. His mind, still on the war and the colored soldiers in the camp at San Antonio, hit upon a song that the black boys in uniform liked for its snappy air and were singing pretty often, to the pain and perturbation of high-browed musical folk who couldn't understand why soldiers had rather sing ragtime than "The

Battle Hymn of the Republic," and thought the government ought to take time to educate them out of such preferences.

He sang the first verse, in his pleasant tenor, and the others—except Small, who sat frankly scowling—came in more or less surely on the chorus:

*We're marchin' erlong,
We're marchin' erlong,
We want the chance to go to France, to France a millyun
strong;
To battle for free
Dem-o-cra-cee,
So we're learnin' to shoot an' salute, to suit, an' we'll soon
be marchin' erlong.*

Clara observed the displeasure in Buddy Small's face. She had been looking at him pretty frequently, since dinner. He smiled whenever he caught her eye, and his beautiful, almost-straight hair fell so far down over his forehead that she could imagine it, tousled, coming down into his eyes.

"Do you sing, Mista' Small?" she asked. "Kain't you staht sump'n?"

Almanzar, who was just preparing to begin the second verse, took his turn at scowling.

"I like ol'-timey tunes, don't you?" Small said. "Ol' songs like 'Swing Low' an' 'Welcome Table,' an' like 'at.'"

"Let's sing 'Welcome Table,'" Clara agreed, with enthusiasm. "*Eve'ybody* knows 'at, so we kin *all* sing."

As Buddy had not participated in the former song, Almanzar now for the first time learned what a fine voice he had. It was a strong, musical baritone, especially adapted to the strange minors and slurred passages of the old folksong that Southern negroes love, its every line a crude record of the heart-throb of the slave who saw hope for liberty and retribution only in the heavenly hereafter:

*I'm goin' ter sit down at the Welcome Table
Some o' these days;
I'm goin' ter feast on milk an' honey,
Some o' these days;
Hallelujah!*

They all took part, even Eph Garrison and Sallie, and the strange, barbaric harmonies of the "Hallelujah!" which, as the negroes sing them, have proven the despair of many a musician striving to represent them by written notes, resounded across the prairie.

The song ran on, verse after verse, to the triumphant:

*I'm goin' ter tell God how you treat me
Some o' these days.*

Buddy Small's voice, which was carrying the solo line in each verse, quavered, slowed up, stopped. They all looked at him and from his straining eyes to a cloud of dust in the road, far off toward the west. The singing ceased and they all heard the insistent popping of a motor.

"Now who you expect 'at might be?" their host demanded. "Them things don't eveh come down thisyer road, less'n they los' theih way."

They could see, now, that it was a motorcycle driven by a white man. The guests noticed only vaguely, as the rider swung from the road toward the house, that Buddy Small rose silently and faded swiftly through the doorway behind him,

He passed straight through the house and out by the back door. A shed, only a few yards distant, had against its hither side an uneven, tumbledown trellis, now luxuriantly covered with honeysuckle. Probably he had long since noted the thickness of the vine, which would completely conceal one who hid behind it provided only he kept his feet off the ground, because he did not hesitate.

He slid behind the honeysuckle, put a foot on the lowest bar of the trellis and gripped an upper crosspiece to lift himself. A scorpion, dozing on that upper crosspiece just beside the spot where Buddy's hand fell, awoke and protested after the manner of his kind. Those in front of the house heard an ago-

nized yelp, a thud as feet came down on the ground, a scramble as they went up again, and stifled, quickly repressed imprecations.

The white man on the motorcycle brought it to a stop at the gallery.

"Howdy, Eph," he remarked, with businesslike directness. "Evenin', A'nty." He appraised the gathered guests with a calculating eye. "Any of these boys your nephew Cash?"

"My nephew Cash?" Garrison repeated. "What you mean, Cash, Mista' Freeman?"

"Cash Small. You've got a nephew named Cassius Thomas Small, haven't you? Ain't he here?"

"Lawsy, no!" the old man replied without a moment's hesitation. "Cash? W'y, 'at boy he went intoe the ahmy, Mista' Freeman. En' he nevah live heah, anyway; he live' oveh in Eas' Texas—an' he was up in Arkansaw w'en he got drafted. They done send him intoe a camp somewheahs up theah in Arkansaw. How come you thought he might be heah?"

The caller looked sharply into Garrison's face, which expressed interested curiosity and nothing more. "I guess you didn't hear, then, that he ain't up in that camp no more," he said. "He deserted. There's a notice out for him."

"Lawsy, Lawsy!" the old man exclaimed. "You say he tuhn hisself loose f'om 'at camp? Wheah did he go, Mista' Freeman?"

"That's what Uncle Sam wants to find out. Ain't there been a young nigger staying with you this last two three days? I heard so over to town."

"Yassuh," Garrison replied, promptly. "Yassuh. My sisteh's boy, Buddy, he was heah. Yassuh. He's brotheh toe 'at triflin', no-'count Cash. Youngeh brotheh. Yassuh, he was heah."

"Where is he?"

"I reckon maybe he's at Houston by toeday. 'At's wheah he was fixin' toe go w'en he lef'. He had er job at Houston."

The white man looked over the visitors. "Any of you know anything about this here Cash Small?" he suddenly demanded, accusingly.

"Nossuh." They said it almost in chorus. One of the boys added: "I nev' heard of him befo', suh. We folks is all f'om San 'Ntonio."

Eph Garrison, whose relations with Deputy-Sheriff Freeman always had been pleasant, asked a question:

"How come Cash done quit the ahmy, Mista' Freeman? Did he get intoe some trouble up thataway?"

"No trouble that I've heard except that he was a yellow coward," the white man said, shortly. "When they get him he'll work for the government quite some time—and it won't be carrying a gun, either. If he comes here you let me know; you hear *me*, Eph?"

"Sho'ly," the old man assented. "Sho'ly. Now jes' think of 'at triflin' Cash Small goin' an' quittin' the ahmy w'en——"

The officer was already preparing to start his motor.

"They knew he had an uncle down thisaway," he said, "so they let me know, and when I heard you had a strange young nigger visitin' with you I thought I'd——" He straightened up. "I'm going to look the place over, anyway."

"Come right in, suh," Eph cried. "Go right in the house an' look eroun'. Lawsy! Runnin' away f'om the ahmy an' gettin' notices sent out toe sheriffs, an'——"

Mr. Freeman went into the house and visited each room, then stood in the back doorway and thoughtfully surveyed the scenery. The shed alone seemed to possess possibilities of concealment; he entered it and peered back of and under the agricultural implements that cluttered it. He came back, then, to his motorcycle.

"If he comes here, send me word," he again warned. "Don't you go to hidin' him out, Eph!"

"Yassuh. I sho' will. Yassuh. But I don' guess he'll eveh come heah, Mista' Freeman. He'll mo' likely to go somewheahs in Eas' Texas, wheah he lives."

"Sounds probable," Freeman said, and again made ready to depart. "Well, g'by, Eph. Evenin', A'nt

Sallie." He nodded comprehensively to the others. His motorcycle went sputtering back up the road.

Its dust was dissipating on the far horizon before any one spoke except Garrison, and he broke the silence but once—with a significant glance toward his wife which nobody but Almanzar happened to observe. Then he only said:

"Jes ' imagine Mista' Freeman gettin' Cash an' Buddy all mix' up lak 'at!"

From inside the house came a wailing, earnest plaint:

"A'nt Sallie! Oh, A'nt Sallie! Wheah's sump'n to put on a sting? I done put mah hand on a ol' sting-in'-scorpion, an' he sho'ly druv his tail into me good! Kain't you come a-runnin', A'nty?"

Their hostess hastened to respond to the appeal. At the same time Eph Garrison raised his voice and shouted through the door:

"'At man, Buddy, was Mista' Freeman, er deputy-sheriff. He was lookin' foh yo' brotheh Cash. Cash done lef' the ahmy."

"Mah brotheh Cash!" The exclamation contained a note of astonishment and a strange emphasis on the second word. Aunt Sallie's murmuring voice cut in on it and Buddy said nothing further, at least not distinctly enough to be heard by the visitors. He came to the door presently, his features still screwed up with the pain of the insect sting.

"Know who I thought 'at w'ite man was?" he remarked, conversationally, as he found a chair. "I thought he was er w'ite man I had a ruckus with one day up in San 'Ntonio. 'At w'ite man, he used to ride one o' them motorcycles. Said, 'at day I had trouble with him, he'd get me some time an' get me good. W'en I saw him comin', I sho'ly thought it was him."

Nobody questioned this plausible explanation. They went back to talking and singing. It was nearly an hour before the effect of the scorpion's protest wore off sufficiently for Buddy Small to feel like participating in the music, but before it was time to go he obliged several times. All his contributions were of the old-fashioned sort. The war was not again discussed.

Old Eph Garrison had clearly sensed the sincerity of Almanzar's earlier comments on the draft, and when, as the party was getting ready to leave, he found himself beside the boy with nobody in hearing, he spoke, abruptly, thoughts that must have been surging for outlet:

"My daddy he was body-sehvant toe ol' Cunnel Garrison, w'en he was er young man. Him an' ol' Cunnel see a right smaht o' fightin'. But he didn' run away, my daddy didn'. Nossuh. 'Pears toe me like boys ain't ez good nowadays, some of 'em, ez they use' toe be. You know, Mista' Evarts, I don't like to have

my folks runnin' away w'en all the other cullud boys is stayin'."

Almanzar, surprised at this sudden confidence, could answer only with a sympathetic silence. The old man broke out, with surprising heat:

"Wouldn' caih ef the gov'ment *did* get him, en' put him in the pen, en' keep him the rest of his natchull-bawn, triffin' life! Disgracin' all his kin thataway! Serve him right!" He sighed. "But you kain't go tellin' things toe w'ite folks. Ain't nothin' *evah* toe be gain' by 'at."

"Theah certain'y ain't," Almanzar agreed.

Dusk was falling, and the eight young people were well on the road back to San Antonio, when one of them cried:

"Let's sing! Some o' that lively music. You staht it, 'Manzar."

All the afternoon the second verse of that camp ditty which Buddy Small would not let him finish had been lurking, unexpressed, in Almanzar's system. He waited for no urging to begin it.

"Oh, *don't*, 'Manzar!" Clara Little cried, petulantly. "*Don't* let's sing any o' those ol' wah pieces. Don't you love ol'-timey songs? Let's have 'Welcome Table.' But it won't soun' the same without Mista' Small heah to lead. Ain't he jes' the *lovely* singeh?"

Somebody else started "The Welcome Table."

Almanzar neither sang nor spoke, unless directly addressed, the remainder of the way home.

After his first sulkiness wore off, he did not think so much about Clara and how angry she had made him, as at first. His mind mostly was on Cassius Small, deserter. Cassius Small, who had disgraced his family and colored folks generally. Cassius Small, who had a saddle-colored skin and almost-straight hair, and who did not hesitate to interrupt singers and substitute other music for theirs.

Back of all this was a real, if inarticulate, sense of patriotic resentment. It was true that when Almanzar was drafted he had been depressed, and when he found he was going to be exempted he was elated. But that was because he was *afraid*. He hadn't for an instant considered claiming exemption, or running away from the draft, or shirking in any way whatever. Scared as he was, he would have gone on, if the doctors hadn't refused him because of his eyes. That he had learned of his disability from friendly Doctor Masters before the official examination and concealed the knowledge while he basked in some very agreeable hero-worship, was merely an incident.

He had a profound contempt for all deserters, white or black. If he could only—— His mind touched fleetingly on whether it would be an improper return for old Eph Garrison's hospitality, and instantly dis-

missed the thought; he knew the old man himself would be glad to see it happen.

One went, Almanzar supposed, up to the army camp and interviewed a white colonel, or general, or something. Or perhaps it might be done at the police station. Both equally impossible!

Inspiration came to him when they had passed the close-lying suburbs of the city and were nearly home.

His mind had drifted back to the time when he went before the doctors for his own physical examination. His girl of the moment had encouraged him to hope for acceptance; Millie Estabrooks, now three or four fiancées removed. Millie's grandfather had fought with a Union colored regiment; her grandmother still lived on a pension; her favorite uncle had been in the Regular Army nearly twenty years——

There flashed into Almanzar's mind the picture of Millie's uncle, Top-Sergeant A. Lincoln Estabrooks, a grave, erect, authoritative man of forty-odd, whom he had met several times at Millie's house. Unless he had been sent away very recently, Almanzar knew that Sergeant Estabrooks was still at Camp Travis, molding colored draft recruits into soldiers.

He said his good nights in the shortest possible form, and set out for the camp. Fortunately he had fifteen cents, which gave him the necessary carfare with a nickel to spare. He couldn't think of anything he might need the extra nickel for, so, while he waited

at a transfer point for his Army Post car, he slipped into a colored drug store and spent it for a glass of soda.

It wasn't easy at that hour to reach Sergeant Estabrooks, but Almanzar accomplished it. He stuttered and blundered his opening words, while Estabrooks surveyed him with eyes that were used to seeing what colored boys were trying to get at.

"What I want to know is a li'l info'mation," he said. "About ef a fella knew—or maybe ef he jes' thought he knew—wheah theah was a man 'at had run away f'om the ahmy——"

"Who is it?"

The sergeant hurled the question at him so sharply that he answered before he thought: "Name's Cash Small. He quit some camp up in Arkansaw. But, listen, Mista' Estab'ooks. I'm jes' tellin' *you*, you know."

"I know. Where is he?"

This time Almanzar hesitated. He decided there was nothing to do except frankly submit his problem in racial ethics to the soldier.

"But, looky heah, Mista' Estab'ooks. 'Tain't fitten to go tellin' cullud folks' business to white folks. Kain't go to git after a thing like this without doin' 'at, kin you?"

"*Some* cullud folks' business white folks *ought* to know," the sergeant declared, positively. "But you

don't need to, Evarts. You kin jes' tell me, an' I'll natchully 'tend to the rest."

"But I don't even know if it's him," Almanzar protested. "Is they any way you kin find out what kind o' lookin' man a fella name' Cash Small—Cassius Thomas Small—is, 'at run away f'om 'at camp I mention'."

"I reckon likely. Come on up to the cap'n an' we'll——"

"Nossuh!" Almanzar sprang back and almost took to his heels. "Ain' goin' to see *no* white man er-*tall*."

Estabrooks sized him up shrewdly. "But you'll stay here until I come back, won't you?" Almanzar agreed.

The sergeant's words, upon his return, were terse and to the point:

"Age twenty-three, height five foot seven, weight a hundred an' sixty-two, very light colored, straight hair——"

"'At's him," Almanzar broke in, eagerly. "It sho'ly is. Well, suh—— Ef I was sho' it was right to be tellin'——"

"What makes some white folks say all niggehs is wuthless?" demanded Sergeant Estabrooks, sharply. "You an' me know they ain't. You an' me know good white folks an' we know good cullud folks. But if a cullud man—citizen of the United States—cullud man that has a vote an' can live where he

please' an' work foh whoever he please' an' leave his job when he please' instead of bein' a slave, like he used to be—if 'at cullud man don't help the American flag when it needs to be help', how you goin' to blame those white folks if they say he's no good?"

"That's sho'ly right, Mista' Estab'ooks, yassuh!" Almanzar agreed, emotionally swept off his feet. "Well, it's thisaway——"

The sergeant listened without interruptions. "Will you go with me to get him?" he demanded, when the story was finished. "The cap'n is likely to send me."

"Nossuh. Please. I'd ruther not. I got t' get home. Mista' Fahnswo'th don't expec' me to stay out ve'y late. But I kin tell you ezzactly how to get theah." He described the route in detail. "How you goin'?" he asked.

"With another man, in a side-car, prob'ly," the sergeant replied. He was already moving toward the captain's quarters.

"Then you betteh stop it a mile er so this side, an' walk. 'At poppin' of them engines is sho' alarmin'. An' ef you don' find him in the house or eroun', look behine the honeysuckle on the side of 'at shed. But don't paw eroun' in it; it's got stingin'-scorpions."

He thought of the sergeant and another soldier dashing across the country in a side-car motorcycle. It brought to his mind that chase in the picture, where Lawrence Rich, the secret service detective, pursued

Charles Winsor Hamilton across interminable cut-backs. He visualized the capture, much as it had occurred on the screen, with the officer producing a pistol and the prisoner declaring, with a sneer: "I suppose you are after the reward they pay for bringing deserters back."

A reward! He hadn't thought of that. Well, although it was not for any reward he had done it, if there was something coming to somebody—he thought it might be as much as five dollars—he couldn't see any reason why the matter should be overlooked.

"Mista' Estab'ooks!" he called, and ran after him. "Jes' a minute. Somebody tol' me, once, theah was a rewahd if a fella gets a man 'at run away f'om the ahmy."

"There is if the deserter is delivered to the neares' ahmy camp," Estabrooks said. "I reckon, if you wanted to go with me an' point this man out, maybe you'd get it."

Almanzar sighed. "Thanky', suh," he said. "Well, I'll be goin' erlong home."

A slight smile flitted across the soldier's face. "I'll speak to the cap'n about it, anyway," he said. "Maybe, seein' as we hadn't heard a thing about him an' we make the arrest without any other civilian help, maybe he can fix it foh you to get something."

"Thanky' kindly," Almanzar acknowledged. "Well, good night, suh."

A second lieutenant and Sergeant Estabrooks came to Mr. Farnsworth's office one afternoon and gave him information that caused him to telephone his wife to have Almanzar change his clothes and come downtown as fast as the first street car would bring him. At the officer's command, the colored top-sergeant, standing stiffly at attention, recounted the circumstances responsible for Almanzar's windfall.

Almanzar came, fell over a chair, dropped his hat, listened with bulging eyes, and finally stared unbelieving at the incredible stack of banknotes—fifty dollars—that the white man in uniform placed on Mr. Farnsworth's desk. In a daze, he signed his name to the receipt the officer produced. The white man and Sergeant Estabrooks went away.

"Almanzar." Mr. Farnsworth's voice was kindly but firm. "What are you going to do with all that money?"

The boy replied without a second's hesitation:

"Get me a Chillycloth soot. An' two new shirts—*three* new shirts. An' a paih o' shoes."

"You don't need a single one of those things. You've got a nice Palm Beach from last year."

"Palm Beaches ain't as stylish as Chillycloth this yeah, so I heard, Mista' Fahnswo'th."

"That's nonsense. They cost more than Palm Beaches, but they aren't any cooler, and that's what you wear thin clothes for. *I'm* not going to buy any

Chillycloth suits, Almanzar, nor any Palm Beaches, either. I'm going to get along this summer with my last year's clothes."

"Well, you don' have to, suh. You ain't a young fella an' you don' have to dress jes' so; eve'ybody *knows* you kin afford to buy new clothes ef you want 'em. With me, Mista' Fahnswo'th, it's diffe'ent."

His employer turned abruptly and searched in a filing case until he was sure he had control of his features.

"But there's something else," he said, seriously. "People aren't buying clothes this year like they did before the war." He hesitated, trying to put it so the servant could comprehend. "Money that is put into clothes can't go to fight the war. The thing to do with money, these days, is save it and put it into Liberty Bonds and Savings Stamps. See here, Almanzar. Did you ever save any money?"

"Yassuh. Once. Mama kept it foh me ontwel it got to be sixteen dollahs an' eighty-five cents."

"And then you spent it."

"Yassuh." Almanzar's voice showed a trace of surprise at the absurdity of the question.

"Well, I'm going to ask you—— No, I won't put it that way; this is your money and of course you have a right to do anything you please with it—anything whatever. I'm going to *suggest* to you. You could buy a Liberty Bond with this fifty dollars, Almanzar,

and you would always have it. Every six months you would get interest on it, just as if you had your money in a savings bank, and if you got sick, or wanted to help your people, or anything, the bond would be worth the fifty."

"Yassuh," Almanzar agreed, blankly.

"And it's the patriotic thing to do," Mr. Farnsworth urged. "These days everybody ought to take all the money he can save and buy Liberty Bonds. Colored people ought to be patriotic as white people. Don't you think so?"

"Ef we ain't," Almanzar replied, glibly, to Mr. Farnsworth's surprise, "us cullud folks kain't blame some white folks ef they says we-all is wuthless, kin we? How do I fix to get this—er—Libbuty Bon'?"

"Go right over to the bank—the Stockmen's National—and see Colonel Mellish, the first vice-president. I'd go over with you, but I've got some gentlemen waiting to see me in the outer office this minute. But you tell him you work for me, and that I sent you and asked him to fix you up, and that you want to buy a fifty-dollar bond."

He passed the money to Almanzar, who stuffed it into the deepest recess of a pocket. The boy did not look as elated as he had a few moments before; Mr. Farnsworth was almost sorry for him. "Don't waste any time getting there," he added, having in mind the temptation that would shout from store windows if

Almanzar were to delay. "You can just about make it before the bank closes."

He went home at his usual hour and Mrs. Farnsworth met him at the door. There was an expression on her face that he instantly identified; she was bursting with a desire to pass along some news that he would enjoy. As he hung up his hat Almanzar's voice, pitched in a gladsome key, came blithely through from the kitchen.

"Happy, isn't he?" Mr. Farnsworth commented. "I didn't think he would be. What's the matter?" as this innocent remark moved Mrs. Farnsworth to repressed laughter. "What's the glad joke? Something funny happened?"

His wife straightened her face with difficulty. "I'm dying to tell you," she said, "but it wouldn't be fair. It would cheat you out of something to remember; you wouldn't get it half so well from me as you will from him. Call Almanzar into the dining room, Fred, and ask him to tell you about his Liberty Bond. And, Fred. Don't ask him about it just that way. Ask him what he bought with his fifty dollars."

"He promised me——" Mr. Farnsworth began, but she urged: "Don't talk. Call him in and ask him."

Mr. Farnsworth opened the door that led from the dining room to the butler's pantry and called the servant. Almanzar's singing stopped, and he came hurrying, his face wreathed in unmanageable grins.

"Well, what about the fifty?" Mr. Farnsworth asked. "How did you come out?"

"Fine, Mista' Fahnswo'th; jes' puffec'ly fine," he declared. "I done got 'at Libbuty Bon', jes' like you told me, suh—an' a soot of Chillycloth clo's, an' a pair o' shoes, an' three shirts, *an'* six collahs an' a necktie."

"Didn't you go right to the bank, like I told you?"

"Yassuh. I done went right away. An' I see 'at ol' gen'leman, Cunnel Mellish, an' I told him I wukked foh you an' 'at you sent me over to buy a Libbuty Bon'. An' he asks me, 'How do you want to make the payments?' an' I asks him, 'What prices of payments is they?' So he tells me 'at f'om a cullud boy like me, 'at wuks foh Mista' Fred Fahnswo'th, he would take five dollahs down an' a dollah a week. He said 'at wasn't ezzactly 'cordin' to the rule, but the bank would carry it—I *think* he said 'carry it'—foh any boy 'at was sent him by Mista' Fred Fahnswo'th. I don' guess you'd eveh heard erbout 'at way of buyin' 'em foh cullud folks, had you, suh? So I give him five dollahs, an' he had me write my name on a papah, an' 'en he says Mista' Fred Fahnswo'th was a fine, pat'iotic man an' he knew his house-boy would be a good, pat'iotic boy—an' 'en he gave me two bits, suh, foh myself. 'At Cunnel Mellish certain'y spoke mighty highly of you, suh."

A smothered sound from the living room warned

Mr. Farnsworth that his wife was experiencing some strong and well-nigh uncontrollable emotion.

"I see," he said, chokingly. "Very good of him," and went and looked for a long minute out of a window. When he turned there were queer drawn lines at the sides of his mouth.

"Then you got the clothes, too."

"At Radway en' Dunne's," grinned Almanzar, ecstatically. "I reminded 'em 'at I wukked foh you, an' paid 'em in advance, an' they done took my measures, an' they're goin' to *make* 'em."

EPISODE VII

A ONE-MINDED WIDOW

FLAT on the grass beneath a thick-leaved chinaberry-tree, Almanzar had slumbered soundly since early afternoon and now it was after four. A few feet from him the Spitz dog also slept, intermittently breaking his naps to seek a cooler piece of grass or to casually assure himself by a tour of inspection that nobody had altered the contents of the yard while he dozed.

The sun had moved until first Almanzar's feet, then his legs and now his body were in its full glare. This did not waken him nor even seem to cause him discomfort, although the mercury in the shade, that June afternoon, stood at 96. What finally roused him was a rapidly increasing hum and whirr that would have been quite unfamiliar a few years ago—the exhaust of a low-flying airplane.

It sounded like the drone of a swarm of giant bees; the little white dog plainly suffered some unpleasant memory in connection with such a murmur, for he leaped to his feet, startled, and spun swiftly around in a circle, peering in all direction with a suspicious

eye. He had fallen to brushing his ears frantically with his paws and to rolling over and over in acute hysteria when Almanzar drawled reproof:

"Stop yo' foolishness, Rufus! 'At ain't bees."

The dog ceased his antics, only half believing. Almanzar, drowsily shifting his position to get a better view, put both hands under his head and watched the unusual and quite spectacular performance of the flier.

The plane was barely a half mile high and it was circling over a very limited area of which the Farnsworth house was not far from the center. The airman was not only skilful but daring. He banked, side-slipped, looped the loop, hopped to a slightly greater altitude, went into a nose dive, and straightened out so low above the houses that the markings on the under side of his plane were easily decipherable, all the time remaining in the same vicinity, almost overhead.

Almanzar, quite unaware that there was especial risk in what the aviator was doing or that by his acrobacy so low over the city an important rule of the flying service was being violated, viewed the performance with chuckling delight. A voice broke in on his amusement:

"'At man certain'y mus' have a lady livin' eroun' heah somewheahs. Certain'y is showin' off *some*. I nevah see a flyin' machine projeckin' eroun' like 'at

in all my life. Y-a-s-suh. He's sho'ly pufformin' fo' a lady."

The voice came surprisingly from a point not ten feet behind Almanzar's head. It was a very pleasant feminine voice. Almanzar scrambled to his feet and faced a young woman so attractive that he instantly forgot the venturesome aviator and became conscious of the fact that he was sketchily wearing very old clothes.

"Howdy-do," he said, lamely. "I jes' been takin' li'l' nap."

On closer and more comprehensive view she was even better looking than at first. Her skin was of a rich bronze shade similar to his own. Her eyes were large and expressive. She had beautiful teeth that glistened in a captivating smile. She was plump and rounded.

There was no fence between the Farnsworth yard and the adjacent one, and he knew at once who she must be. A new family had moved into the next house the afternoon before; he had observed, that morning, the presence on the back gallery of a feminine servant, so disguised by a mob cap that he had given no thought to the possibility that she might be young.

Although he did not realize this, the girl's pleasing plumpness had also contributed to his vague impression that she was middle-aged; it was a plump-

ness that within a very few years would not be called plumpness, except by the very charitable.

"You is certain'y been havin' a good sleep," she commented. "I notice' you layin' out heah the whole endurin' afternoon. Your white folks mus' be away fuh day or two, I guess."

"Fuh mos' two weeks," Almanzar announced, proudly. "Been gone a week today. Lef' me in chahge. They done went up No'th. To a convention. To Atlantic City."

"Mista' an' Miz Conway—that's the folks I wuk foh—they come f'om up thataway."

"F'om Atlantic City?"

"Chicago. They jes' come to San 'Ntonio, jes' a week er so ago. Been livin' at a hotel ontwel they lease' this house."

"Are they tourists, or got folks in the ahmy?"

"They ain't said nothin' 'bout no ahmy kin. Tourists, I reckon."

As neither Almanzar nor the girl really appreciated that the heat of a South Texas summer *was* hot, it did not seem peculiar to either that Northern tourists, who come by the thousands in the winter, should visit San Antonio in June.

"I'm a strangeh heah, too," she added. "I only come to San 'Ntonio three weeks ago. I come f'om Waco." She smiled plaintively, and added: "It's

sorta lonesome bein' in a strange city without no frien's."

Almanzar's natural gallantry was augmented by a growing sentiment of admiration. The stranger from Waco undeniably had a fascinating way of talking. Her eyes, also, were very, very, expressive.

"Oughta be able to fix 'at, right soon," he said. "Ef so be you'd like to have me, I could interjuce you to lots o' nice folks, Miss——"

"Bodley," she supplied. "Josephine Bodley. My close frien's always calls me Josie."

Almanzar gave his own name, adding, warmly:

"I hope I'm goin' to be one o' them close frien's, Miss Josie. Sorta seems like I oughta be, me bein' the firs' to welcome you to ouah neighborhood an' all. You'll have lots of others, too, I kin plainly see 'at. Don' take no mind-reader to see 'at you is the kin' o' lady gets lots o' frien's quick."

"Not so many," Josie deprecated. "I ain't never had no great crowds o' frien's." She explained this lack with becoming modesty: "Mama's folks all done come f'om Virginia, and she nevah let us 'sociate much with anybody but Virginia fam'lies."

Almanzar had pride of ancestry himself (his aged great-grandfather never for a moment allowed it to be forgotten that he had been a servant of Colonel Reese Evarts of Louisiana before the war) but Lou-

isiana was not Virginia, and he hastened to slant the conversation in a slightly different direction.

"Lots o' nice folks I could make you 'quainted with down to ouah chuhch. That is—— I hope you are Meth'dis', Miss Josie?"

"Baptis'. All my folks has been Baptis' sence I don' know when—excep' a li'l' spell when papa an' my oldes' sister was Holy Rollers. I'm aimin' to connec' myself with the Baptis' Chuhch heah."

"I sing firs' tenor in the Meth'dis' choir."

"Ain't 'at a shame! I mean," as he registered surprise, "I mean ain't it a shame I kain't come to heah you sing regular. But I could go once er twice, maybe. I guess it ain't so sinful to go to diff'ent chuhch f'om yo' own when you is a stranger in a new city."

"I shall be mos' happy to esco't you nex' Sunday," Almanzar cried. "An' in the meantime we ought to be able to get real well acquainted, livin' right heah in the same yahd, thisaway. They's a movin' pitcher down to the Gaines Palace tonight that——"

"Oh, ain't 'at nice of you, Mista' Evarts!"

"An' tomorrow"—Almanzar paused to do a sum in mental arithmetic, for there could be no drawing of wages until his employers' return—"tomorrow we'll think of sump'n else."

"Have you got all the 'sponsibility for the house,

while you' white folks is away?" she asked. "Isn't nobody at home but you an' the li'l' gray dawg?"

"White dawg," he corrected. "He's been runnin' eroun' an' fightin' an' gettin' a li'l' dirty. Yassuh; at's all they is. Jes' me an' him. Mista' an' Miz Fahnswo'th done lef' me completely in chahge. Miz Fahnswo'th says to me: 'Almanzar,' Miz Fahnswo'th says, 'you almos' the same as gettin' a vacation,' she says. 'You jes' sleep on the place, an' get you' meals, an' keep the grass cut an' the palms watched an' give Rufus plenty o' baths so he'll be nice an' clean all the time I'm gone.'"

The flying machine having long since ceased its circus evolutions and streaked it in the direction of Kelly Field, the Spitz had resumed his nap. Josephine surveyed him idly.

"I don't guess you've washed him yet," she said.

"Only get all dirty again befo' Miz Fahnswo'th gets home. They're aimin' to arrive nex' Thuhsday; Thuhsday mawnin'. Tuesday I 'low to cut the grass, an' Wednesday I wash Rufus. Or maybe I cut the grass Wednesday mawnin' an' wash Rufus Wednesday evenin'. Depen's how I feel Tuesday."

As this was how she herself would have planned it, his program did not call for comment. A moment later he said:

"I ain't happen to see the folks you wuk foh. Is they quality?"

The girl hesitated.

"I ain't wuk fuh 'em but one day," she temporized. "Sometimes you kain't tell so soon. Mista' Conway, he's a right quiet man. Sets in the front room all day writin' an' readin'. Been writin' letters this evenin' an' tearin' 'em up, an' writin' 'em an' tearin' 'em up. Got to get 'em jes' so, I s'pose. He's been in the house the whole endurin' day; ain't even walk' out on the gallery."

"Josephine!" It was Mrs. Conway's voice.

"Yassum. I'm comin'. Time to go staht dinneh," she told Almanzar, as she moved away. "We have dinneh at half-pas' six. I reckon I could be ready to staht fo' 'at pitcher show by eight."

"I'll be right heah a-waitin'. Got a li'l' erran' to do myself after I get my supper, but I'll have it done an' be back heah befo' eight. Get my supper any time I want to, natchully, bein' in chahge thataway."

At seven o'clock or thereabouts, Almanzar, full panoplied in his newest and most stylish raiment, locked the door of his little house, paying no heed to Rufus' profane protests that it was a dirty trick to leave him shut up there, and set out for downtown. His errand was to seek a certain friend who sometimes had an extra dollar, with the purpose of negotiating a loan for a week, to help tide over the financial emergency that he felt assured his new friendship was

destined to produce. He had nearly reached the sidewalk when a man's voice called :

" Oh, nigger! Come here a minute! "

A man in his late thirties—undoubtedly Mr. Conway himself—was standing on the Conway front gallery with a letter in his hand.

His command was not spoken harshly and he was smiling, wherefore Almanzar also smiled and approached him politely, but in that instant he had Mr. Conway classified socially. Mr. Conway was *not* quality. Quality does not hail a colored boy as " nigger " except in badinage, he being a very good friend, or in stern reproof, he having committed some fairly serious offense.

Not that Almanzar's feelings were at all hurt. He perceived from Mr. Conway's smile that Mr. Conway meant well. As a matter of fact, the new neighbor's previous experience in the South had consisted of one visit to the New Orleans Mardi Gras, and, having heard colored men thus accosted on the streets of that city, he thought he was now merely falling into the customs of the country. Almanzar felt no resentment; he merely placed Mr. Conway as not being a member of the class of white folks he was proud to know.

" Yassuh," he replied.

" You want to mail a letter for me? "

" Yassuh."

Mr. Conway held out the letter in one hand, with the too liberal but welcome reward of a silver quarter in the other.

"You needn't put it in the Post Office," he said. "In fact, I'd rather you wouldn't. Just drop it into some street letter box."

"Yassuh. Thanky', suh."

He carried the envelope in his hand until he had turned the corner. Then he looked at its superscription. It was addressed to somebody in New York—some man named "Durgin, Esq." He put it away carefully in his inner breast pocket, with his registration card and exemption certificate, to await his arrival at a mail box. He thought cheerfully of what could be done with an unexpected two bits, judiciously expended.

The friend who sometimes had a dollar may or may not have had one that June evening, but if he had he declined to admit it. The best Almanzar could get out of him was a hazy suggestion as to other young men who might have money to lend—all of them youths sufficiently well known to Almanzar for him to esteem it highly improbable. He spent so much time debating the matter—even offering, finally, to pay two bits bonus for the week's use of the dollar the friend said he didn't possess—that he had to hurry, after the profitless interview, to get back in time to keep his appointment. He arrived at quarter-

past eight, which was about his idea of perfect promptness, anyway, and Josephine came out of her house, radiant in purple and magenta, six minutes later.

The picture show proved to be as delightfully thrilling as anticipated. After the final fadeaway, they walked home and sat upon the little rustic bench in the Farnsworths' back yard, while Rufus, released from durance, went about the neighborhood playing he was a detective and that all cats were criminals, occasionally returning home to see if Almanzar was still there.

The young people, at eleven o'clock, had progressed to the point of using each other's first names freely and comparing intimate likes and dislikes.

Josephine's hand rested upon Almanzar's arm and softly patted the fabric of his coat.

"Seems to me, 'Manzar," she said, "I nev' did see such a pretty soot o' Chillycloth as you got. When I firs' see you, goin' off downtown las' night wearin' this soot, I says to myself, I says, 'I nev' did see prettier clo's 'at fitted nicer.' I guess 'at's right expensive soot, ain't it, 'Manzar?"

"Tailor-made," he boasted. "By Radway an' Dunne, Mista Fahnswo'th's own tailors. I likes Radway an' Dunne. They ve'y good tailors indeed. I'm choicy 'bout my clo's."

"Anybody could tell, to look at you, 'at you was

prosp'ous. I bet you didn't buy clothes like them jes' f'om what you mek out of you' job heah."

"I got a li'l propputty o' my own," he replied, complacently. "A li'l propputty—an' Libbuty Bon's."

Shortly before midnight he proposed to her after a well-tried formula:

"I'm jes' crazy erbout you, Josie. I wish you an' me could git married."

"When?"

He was a trifle staggered. He had received replies to that question many times, but none before had consisted of just that prompt monosyllable.

"When?" she repeated, softly, her cheek close against his.

"Why—er—any time."

"Tomorrow?"

"Lawdy, no, not tomorrow! Miz Fahnswo'th ain't home."

"Do we have to wait untwel they get home, y?"

"I couldn't go tuh git married without Miz Fahnswo'th. I knew it," he said. "She wouldn' like it, an' it's awful good to me—always. Nossuh! I'd like to," he added, "but I jes' natchully

They comin' home Thuhsday. We could get mar-

ried Friday, maybe, or Sat'day. We could, couldn't we, 'Manzar?"

"My goodness!" he laughed. "You sho' is a one-minded lady."

"Wukkin' right heah in the same yard, we kin live in either my house or your house, or both. *When*, 'Manzar?"

Her impetuosity swept him off his feet.

"Sat'day soun's good to me," he declared. "'At's a week f'om tomorrow." Some instinct of caution made him add: "An' we'll keep it secret ontwel then, an' surprise eve'ybody."

"We goin' to be awful happy, 'Manzar, ain't we?" She snuggled into his arms.

It was twenty minutes later when he whispered:

"I'm pretty lucky 'at nobody else got you, Josie. How come you neveh got married befo'? I bet you had plenty offehs."

She hesitated a second.

"I did," she confessed. "My 'riginal name was Josie Washin'ton. I got married when I wasn't but seventeen years old."

Never before had Almanzar made love to a widow. The revelation startled him. He wondered if perhaps he had been hasty.

"Who was this Bodley man you married when you was seventeen?" he demanded. "*When* did he die?"

"Died six months afteh we got married. Got a

misery eroun' the heart an' jes' went, spang, in no time. His name wasn't Bodley, though. It was Rupert Spink. I thought Rupert was a awful pretty name. Maybe that's why I got married. Don't you think Rupert is a pretty name?"

Almanzar's brain creaked under the strain of thinking of several things at once.

"But Bodley!" he insisted.

She tossed her head petulantly.

"I don' like to even talk 'bout 'at wuthless, no-count, triffin' nigger Jim Bodley. I reckon he was the laziest, triffin'est man in Waco." She added: "I done divo'ced *him*."

Before Almanzar could formulate a reply—his mind was whirling too confusedly at the moment for words—she wrapped her arms about his neck.

"Let's not talk about them, 'Manzar. I didn' love either of 'em like I loves you."

This, at the moment, satisfied. Almanzar let the dead past bury its dead.

They went to church on Sunday. On Monday he called on his father and succeeded in borrowing a dollar, and they went again to a movie, and on Tuesday night they visited a colored ice cream parlor. Swiftly and smoothly the romance was moving, and Almanzar felt he ought to be happy and elated, but he wasn't; on the contrary, a cloud of depression settled on him at moments when he and Josephine

were not together. It was all going too swiftly; he couldn't figure out exactly how it had happened to gain such momentum. And on Saturday night—this very coming Saturday night—unless Providence should intervene, it was going to culminate irrevocably.

Being engaged was Almanzar's normal condition, but really getting married—right away—was a different proposition. And after they were married, Josephine would have her way, always, just as she was having it now. Always; for years and years and years.

Never before, in all his wide experience, had he tired of a girl so quickly. He did not analyze the cause very clearly, but he pondered incessantly on how he was going to get out of it. Ordinarily he could, on a pinch, simply cease calling, but Josie lived in his own yard. He decided the simplest way was to postpone the wedding and then let things rock along and trust to time and luck.

He could not seem to get a chance to broach the thought of putting off the nuptials, until Wednesday night. Then she gave him the opportunity, or rather forced him to take it or let it pass forever, by asking him if he had yet engaged the services of the reverend for the Saturday ceremony.

It was late and they were seated on the bench under the chinaberry-tree. Almanzar, having put off all

his duties in preparation for the Farnsworths' arrival until the last day, was tired. The grass was cut, the palms trimmed and watered, the kitchen—the only part of the house to which he had had access—put in order, and Rufus, fresh from a thorough bath, sulked disconsolately at the end of a cord that fastened him to the tree lest he go out into the highways and byways and ruin his looks.

Almanzar intimated indirectly that there was a possibility he couldn't get around to being wed on Saturday. He mentioned a purely mythical illness which he had learned that day was threatening his mother.

Josephine drew slightly away from him and sat for a moment in silence. When she spoke it was quite pleasantly and, seemingly, with irrelevance:

"Alec Jackson's mama was took sick—leastways 'at's what he said, 'cordin' to the way I 'members it. Alec Jackson was engage' to marry my frien', Luella Smith. Up to Waco. Lawdy! how 'at Mista' Jackson did sweat befo' huh lawyer done got thoo with him! Got papehs out against him foh b'each o' promise, Luella did."

"What you mean, b'each o' promise? What kind o' papehs is 'at?"

"Wheah a gen'leman asks a lady to marry him an' 'en meks a fool of huh." Josephine's tones were still calm and casual, but Almanzar shivered at an ominous undercurrent in them. "My, my! what 'ey did to 'at

Alec Jackson! Took all the money he had, an' two house lots he owned, an' his hawse an' grocery wagon, an' "—her eyes fell on Almanzar's Chillycloth suit—" 'an all his clo's but jes' his oldes' ones' an'—an' put him in the police pen while they was gettin' all them things. 'At's what 'at Mista' Jackson got fuh playin' fast an' loose with the 'fections of my frien', Luella Smith."

"Serves him right, too, I expec'," Almanzar agreed. "Answerin' yo' question, I was figurin' I'd see the rev'ren' erbout tomorrow night. He'll prob'ly be at choir rehearsal."

If the law reports of Texas show any record of damages awarded a colored person in a breach of promise suit, or even of such a suit ever having been brought between Afro-Americans, Josephine, who was basing her harrowing story of the fate that befell the purely imaginary Mr. Jackson solely upon a conversation she had once overheard between white people, was not aware of it. On the other hand, it did not sound especially strange to Almanzar, to whom all processes of law were mysterious. That he had never before heard of a breach of promise case gave him no cause for incredulity; he learned new things, many of which turned out to be so, nearly every day.

He was thinking very deeply indeed as he snapped out his light and got into bed. If anything could have kept him awake, he would have tossed restlessly, that

night; even as it was, he did not close his eyes for more than five minutes.

Just before he dozed off, he spoke aloud, with sincere fervency:

"Ef I get out o' this, I bet I ain't neveh goin' t' have ernother girl long's I live. No widow or no single, either. Not any er-*tall*. Nossuh!"

Morning brought the Farnsworths and a busy day. Almanzar's mind, as he worked, did not leave his problem. Something had to be done before Saturday.

He touched upon the matter while he was serving lunch.

"Miz Fahnswo'th, did you eveh heah of anybody gettin' arrested foh b'each o' promise?"

"I've heard of people being sued for breach of promise. Why?"

"Heard some talk about it an' thought I'd like to know. How much did it cost 'em to get arrested for 'at?"

"The last one I read about was twenty thousand dollars, I think. It was in New York."

There was an appreciable pause while Almanzar swallowed hard.

"Yassum. Did the man get put in jail ontwel they got the money?"

Mrs. Farnsworth was warm and tired, and she had found moths that morning in the fur on a winter hat

which she had forgotten to put away at the time the rest of her furs went into their summer tar bags. She did not feel like participating in an abstract discussion, and answered absently:

"I don't know. Perhaps, if he tried to hide his property. I don't know."

Almanzar sighed and departed to the kitchen. It was even worse than he had thought. All that afternoon he did not once lift his voice in song.

He saw Josephine in the yard, but had no extended conversation with her. When he was not really too busy to talk, he pretended to be. As soon as his dishes were done, that night, he changed his clothes and started, without delay, for choir rehearsal.

Josephine got a word with him as he came out of his house:

"You goin' to see the rev'ren' tonight, isn't you, 'Manzar?"

"Sho'ly," he replied. "Sho'ly. Unless he ain't theah."

"Ef he ain't, you could go oveh to his house afteh rehearsal."

He agreed to this mechanically.

"Make me pretty late gettin' home, I expect," he said. "Maybe I won't be able t' see you to tell you erbout it befo' mawnin'."

"Oh, I'll be waitin' up, *whatever* time you get home," she assured him, cheerfully.

He decided, on his way to church, to consult his pastor (a younger man who had taken the place of the Reverend Isom G. Penniman after that "grapy-haired" divine had fallen into trouble with the authorities) relative to how one went at it to get a field position with the army colored Y. M. C. A. If the reverend could fix it, he would start for France or somewhere tomorrow; there was small chance Josephine would be able to reach him there.

If the reverend couldn't fix it, then would be time enough to decide whether to mention to him the Saturday evening wedding, to be held at the parsonage.

But the preacher was not at the church, and when the rehearsal came to its end Almanzar's riddle was no nearer solution, nor had his depression lifted. Ordinarily he would have been quite happy, for he had been assigned a solo refrain in a specially arranged piece of music that was to be sung Sunday, but even the sound of his own voice practising this gave him no enjoyment. One thought only echoed and re-echoed through his mind; he must find a way to postpone that wedding—and there probably wasn't any.

He was short-spoken almost to the point of discourtesy to the women members of the choir. He hated them, individually and collectively; they represented a cruel and persecuting sex.

He set out, after rehearsal, in the direction of the preacher's house. A few blocks from the church, in

the light that streamed out across the sidewalk from the largest pool and billiard hall in the negro quarter, he saw a strange colored man in uniform, with the red triangle of the Y. M. C. A. on his sleeve, apparently waiting for a car. This was a bit of unexpected luck; he hastened to accost the stranger.

"Excuse me, suh," he said, wasting no time with preliminaries, for the car might come along at any moment. "How does a man git to go to wuk for the Y. M. C. A.?"

"Meanin' yourself?" the other asked.

"Yassuh."

"How much education have you got?"

"Went thoo grammar."

"That wouldn't do, I'm afraid. Besides, you're draft age."

"I been drafted an' zempted. Foh eyesight."

"That doesn't count. Your draft board might call you again. I'm afraid you couldn't get in. Sorry." He stepped out toward an approaching trolley.

Almanzar stood a moment irresolutely. He no longer wanted to go to the reverend's house. He could not go home; Josephine would be awaiting him at home. He turned aimlessly and entered the pool hall, where he found a seat and without interest watched the play at the busy tables.

A chunky black man of twenty-seven or twenty-

eight, with shabby clothes and furtive, bloodshot eyes, who had been following Almanzar all the way from the church, came in through the door and slouched over to where he sat. As the newcomer opened conversation it was quite plain that he had found some way that evening to evade the ten-mile-zone liquor law. He looked, for that matter, as though he had been on a prolonged debauch.

"Yo' name Evarts?" he demanded, and truculently added, at Almanzar's affirmative: "Bodley's my name. Jim Bodley. F'om Waco. I heah you're runnin' eroun' with my wife. What you got to say 'bout 'at? Is you?"

Almanzar was on his feet by this time. "Why, I—I been goin' eroun' some with the lady," he stammered. "She done tol' me——"

"Looky heah!" Bodley interrupted him. "I don' care what she done tol' you or what she didn' done tol' you. You're studyin' to get married. *I* know. *I* seen a lady what she tol'. Now you listen to me. I ain' got no 'bjection to you marryin' huh—when you git *me* squared. But, firs' an' fo'mos' you is goin' to pay foh me to get a divo'cement. Yassuh! An' you' goin' give me a piece o' money, too. You' a fine, prosp'ous looking fella with you' swell clothes. You goin' give me"—he paused for a second's reflection—"you goin' give me twenty dollahs. Ten dollahs fo' to get a divo'cement, and ten dollahs foh my ownself. An'

'en you kin marry huh a dozen times foh all I caih. But I got to have 'at twenty *now*."

Almanzar did not grasp the significance of all this; sufficient for his mind to wrestle with was the fact that this person who seemed to be on the verge of delirium tremens was demanding from him an incredible sum of money.

"Wheah you s'pose I'd git twenty dollahs?" he temporized.

"What do I caih wheah you git it?" Bodley's attitude became more threatening, and Almanzar began to be frightened. "You' goin' to git it, an' you' goin' to git it befo' I leave you. Ef you don't——"

Almanzar, panicky, started to edge away. Until now their voices had been low and neither pool players nor spectators had observed the quarrel. The whole room was aware of it the next moment, however, when Bodley shouted:

"You stan' wheah you is, man! Tryin' to steal my wife! I'll fix you!"

Almanzar froze with rigid horror and halted paralyzed as the other emphasized the command by dragging from his pocket an automatic pistol. There were warning shouts and cries of terror, as men rushed to get out of range.

Then strange things happened quickly.

Before Bodley could bring the wavering muzzle of

the pistol to cover Almanzar, his wrist was caught and a stern Caucasian voice cried :

" Drop that gun, nigger ! What do you think you're tryin' to do ? " The automatic was wrested out of his hand and he was being held, struggling, by two men in uniform.

The place, miraculously, swarmed with white men. They came in through the doors and guarded the windows. Policemen, soldiers with bands about their arms marked " M. P.," and two or three men in civilian clothes.

" Stand where you are, everybody ! " called one in authority. " All you boys that are thirty-one or under have got to take a little trip to headquarters. We'll let the rest go."

Almanzar gulped a great breath of relief. He had never dreamed the time could come when he would be glad to get caught in a raid.

The white men worked quietly and smartly, paying no heed to protestations. Within a few minutes three-quarters of the pool players and lookers-on, arranged in pairs and well flanked by guards, were on the sidewalk, marching toward the police station.

They found the guard room full of other young men, some black and some white. Pool room raids to uncover slackers were general, that evening.

Each prisoner was required to show his registration card, whereupon he was allowed to go. If he

said he had one but had left it at home, he went into detention until his statement could be verified. The officers wasted no time; new prisoners were arriving momentarily from other raids and they needed the room.

Almanzar's turn came.

He stood before the captain of police who was supervising the examination and went into his inner breast pocket. He laid on the table his card and his certificate of exemption. There was something else in the pocket, to his surprise, and he took it out and stared at it blankly, turning it over and over in his hand. Then, because he was embarrassed by the discovery, he did not return it to his pocket, but laid it also on the table.

"Your card is all right," the captain said. "What's this?"

"That? Jes' a letteh a gen'leman give me to mail."

A thin man in a Palm Beach suit, with slightly gray hair and eye-glasses, who stood beside the captain, glanced casually at the letter, its superscription toward him. Then he looked at it harder, leaned forward and picked it up.

"Where did you say you got it?" he asked, eyeing Almanzar sharply.

"Gen'leman lives nex' house to me—Mista' Conway."

"He sent you to the Post Office with it?"

"Yassuh. Nossuh. Not to the Post Office. He especially said *not* take it to the Post Office. He said drop it in a letteh box." He added, truthfully: "I ain' happen to see no letteh box sence he give it to me up ontwel the time I got arrested."

"Oh, Ames!" the man in the Palm Beach suit called, and another man in civilian clothes came across the room. The first passed him the letter, tapping the address significantly.

"A man asked this boy to mail it," he remarked. "A man named Conway. Suggested he put it in a mailbox rather than at the Post Office."

"What time?" Mr. Ames asked.

"'Bout seven o'clock," said Almanzar. He sincerely hoped they would not go too deeply into this matter. Six days might be regarded as an unreasonable delay.

The two men spoke together and one of them took a folded yellow telegram from his pocket which they both consulted. Almanzar's attention was suddenly drawn away from them and Mr. Conway's letter by the realization that he was the subject of a conversation on his other side, between a policeman and the captain. The policeman was saying:

"They was startin' some sort of a ruckus. This one pulled a gun just as we went in and I took it off him."

The officer produced the automatic and handed it

to the captain. Bodley, who stood beside him, had lost all his bravado and now looked scared and miserable.

"What did this other boy do?" the captain asked.

"I didn't exactly notice. I was right busy for a minute with the gun."

"Did it look like an affray? Was this Evarts advancing towards him?"

"I didn't see that he was."

"Nossuh," Almanzar broke in, earnestly. "Nossuh, I wasn't. When 'at man pull 'at gun, please, suh, I was distinc'ly advancin' *away* f'om him."

"Where's your registration card?" the captain demanded of Bodley. "Don't lie to us; you can't get away with it."

"Honest, I got a card. But it ain't heah. I fohgot an' lef' it in Waco."

"You'll get a chance to send for it. Lock him up on charges of gun-totin' and rudely displaying a pistol. This other boy——" He surveyed Almanzar speculatively. "I reckon you can put vagrancy against him until we find out more about who he is and how much he had to do with starting the disturbance."

"Just a minute, cap'n," a man in plain clothes broke in. "If there ain't anything really against him, I know that boy. He's a pretty good boy. Works for Fred Farnsworth."

"Is that the boy that had the bag of cats, Mac?" somebody else asked, and several men laughed.

"That's him," the detective replied, grinning good-naturedly. "Farnsworth spoke pretty well of him, that night. Said he'd worked for him some years."

Almanzar felt a growing friendliness in the atmosphere. The man in the Palm Beach suit came forward again.

"Is it next to Mr. Farnsworth's house that this Mr. Conway lives? How long has he lived there?"

"Yassuh. Been theah 'bout a week. No'thern gen'leman. He lease' 'at house furnished when Mista' an' Miz Allen went away foh the summeh."

"It might be," the Palm Beach man said to Ames.

"But it isn't likely," Ames contended. "Durgin's arrest has been in all the papers for the past three days. However, we might——" He nodded significantly toward the envelope.

"Want me to see that this gets mailed?" the Palm Beach man asked Almanzar, pleasantly.

"Yassuh, thanky', suh."

The two men went out. Presently the one in the Palm Beach suit came back and spoke confidentially to the captain, who nodded, and called:

"MacQueen, you and Johnson go with Mr. Gooding and Mr. Ames. Give 'em whatever help they need."

He turned again to Almanzar as they went.

"I'm goin' to turn you loose, boy," he said. "But not quite yet. Here's your card. Put it safe in your pocket. Now go over there and sit down. I'll tell you when you can go."

"Thanky', suh." Almanzar did not understand, and he was bound to be uneasy at heart so long as he remained in the station, but things seemed to be brightening. He sat and watched the steady procession of youths that came and went as the result of the city-wide round-up. Nobody paid him any attention.

He had time, while he waited, to review the things Jim Bodley had said during their brief and one-sided altercation. It was possible Bodley had been lying, things might have happened in Waco courts that the ex-husband had never heard of, yet there was, withal, a ray of hope. At least he could reasonably ask for a postponement of the Saturday ceremony pending investigation.

About midnight, when things had quieted down and Almanzar was beginning to get worried for fear he had been forgotten, a man came in and talked a moment to the captain.

"All right, boy. You can go now," the captain said. "Run right along home and don't get into any more trouble."

"Yassuh," Almanzar agreed, and went with alacrity.

To his surprise, notwithstanding the hour, Mr. and Mrs. Farnsworth were sitting on the front gallery as he turned in at the house.

"That you, Almanzar? You're pretty late," Mrs. Farnsworth called.

"Yassum. I had to go to the police station. Had to go an' show 'em my regist'ation cahd. Lots o' boys had to, white *an'* cullud. They tuh'n me loose soon's they see it an' heah I wuk foh you."

"We've had a little excitement around here ourselves," Mr. Farnsworth said. "Secret service men and detectives came out and arrested the man next door. They haven't been gone more than half an hour."

"You say 'ey *did*? Arrested Mr. Conway? What foh, please, suh?"

"He was in a scheme with some other men to help Germany by hurting England; England is fighting with us, you know. When it looked as if they might be caught—so one of the detectives told me—he ran away and came to Texas to try to get across the Mexican border, but it was too well guarded. I suppose he thought a good-sized city would be a better place to hide in than the country, so he came here, changed his name, and was going to lie low. His real name is Callahan."

"You don't tell me, Mista' Fahnswo'th! How come 'ey foun' out wheah he was?"

"I don't know. Those secret service men never tell where they get their evidence."

Almanzar wondered if Josephine was waiting for him in the back yard.

"What happen' to Miz Conway? Did they arrest huh, too?"

"I don't think so. She and the servant went away with him, though. To be questioned, perhaps."

"Yassuh." Almanzar turned away. At the corner of the house he stopped and retraced his steps.

"Oh, Mista' Fahnswo'th," he asked, "could you tell me, please, suh, some info'mation? If a lady gets married when she's already got a husban', she kin get arrested, kaint' she?"

"She certainly can. They call that bigamy."

"Yassuh. Erbout how long would they put huh in the pen foh?"

"I don't know. Five years, I reckon; maybe ten."

"Thanky', suh. Boy was askin' me erbout 'at to-night, an' I tol' him I'd find out. I knew you'd know."

He reflected, as he prepared for bed, that the worst of luck could turn. He hummed a little, softly to himself.

When he came out of his house in the morning, he found Josephine in the yard.

"Awfulles' thing happen' las' night eveh you *did* see, 'Manzar!" she exclaimed. "Police come an' arrested Mista' Conway, an' they goin' take him to Noo

Yawk this mawnin'. An' Miz Conway she's goin' erlong, too, an' I ain't got no job. That's how come I wasn't heah like I said I'd be when you got home. Had to go down town with huh. We're jes' heah now packin' up."

Almanzar did not break his tidings gently; he was too anxious to get it done.

"I got some bad news, too," he said. "Bad news foh you an' me. Who you s'pose I see downtown las' night, Josie? 'At husban' o' yours. 'At Bodley man."

"'At ain' no bad news for me. I don't caih wheah he is."

"He says, Josie——" Almanzar strove to make his voice properly regretful. "Listen, Josie! We kain't git married, 'cause he says you ain' got no divo'cement."

"What 'at lyin' niggeh mean sayin' I isn't got no divo'cement?" she flared. "Didn' I go an' give a lawyer in Waco ten dollahs to get 'em papers foh me?"

"Did he get 'em?"

"Sho' he got 'em. Leastways, he said he would."

"You ain't seen 'em?"

"No. I come away f'om theah. I tol' 'at lawyer Jim Bodley was a triflin', no-'count, drunken niggeh, an' 'at lawyer he said it would cost ten dollahs. So I paid him."

Almanzar had a faint recollection of a detail in a friend's divorce proceedings.

"Did you go to cote?" he demanded. "Did 'at lawyer take you to cote to tell a judge erbout 'at Bodley?"

"No," she admitted. "I neveh heard nothin' erbout no cote er-tall. 'Manzar! Don't you s'pose I got my divo'cement?"

There was rising hysteria in her voice, and he looked apprehensively toward the rear windows of the Farnsworth house, hoping his employers were not yet awake.

"It's jes' awful not to be able to get married yet, like we was fixin' to," he murmured, sadly, "but what 'ey do foh bigotry is fierce."

"Bigotry!"

"'At's what 'ey calls it when a lady gets married if she's got ernother husban'. Ten yeahs in the pen she gets, so Mista' Fahnswo'th tol' me one day. Lawdy, I'm crazy erbout you, Josie, but bein' married wouldn' do me no good with you doin' ten yeahs in the pen—nor you either."

"Ten yeahs!" Josephine gasped. "John o' Jerooze-lum!"

The moment seemed propitious for departure.

"I got to go get breakfas' now," he said. "You kin let me know wheah you is, afteh you gits ernother job. G'by, Josie."

"I sho' thought I had 'at divo'cement," she murmured, dazedly. "I sho' thought I had it! Sho'ly I did."

She was still standing there, wagging her head and muttering to herself, when he disappeared into the kitchen.

On Sunday he sat in the choir, facing a large congregation. His thoughts, since Thursday, had lingered often on his hair-breadth escape. Nothing in his life before had ever so frightened him. Many times he had renewed his resolution made in bed that agonized Wednesday night: "No widows; no singles; no girls er-tall."

Introspective and philosophical was his mood as he comfortably allowed his thoughts to wander while the pastor droned through the First Lesson. He was not listening to the preacher, but a word or two out of the lesson reached his consciousness. "Incline thine ear unto wisdom——" the reverend read. Then: "When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul, discretion shall preserve thee." And then, a moment later: "To deliver thee from the strange woman——"

Dimly Almanzar felt this applied, in some manner, to him. He thought it over. "When wisdom entereth into thine heart." That was it!

Heretofore he had not possessed wisdom. He had known that femininity was oftentimes fickle, but not

how threatening it could become. Now, suddenly, understanding had come to him out of the harrowing hours of experience. The deep emotions of his past week had taught him a lesson that would be imprinted forever upon his consciousness. He saw clearly that never again would he be as he had been; it was as though he were entering upon a new life.

This idea of a new and wiser life was emotionally pleasing; his thoughts dwelt lingeringly upon it. It would, he realized, be a vastly different life, a steadier, less frivolous life. A life, naturally, in which girls would have little place—one in which he would be polite to them, and friendly, and perhaps, on rare occasions, just a little gallant, but in which he would never again lose his heart at the sight of a pretty face or the ripple of a lilting laugh.

He was almost surprised that he experienced no regrets, but, on the contrary, felt strangely uplifted and glad. Plainly the possession of wisdom was to prove its own reward.

He came out of his reverie. The First Lesson had ended, the organ was playing, and the choir-master was signaling the choir to rise for the selection in which Almanzar carried the refrain as a solo.

The music of the hymn was inspiring. His associates sang the first stanza with harmonious effect. Now came his moment, and sweetly, soulfully, his tenor rose to the words of his part:

*Greater hope I could not speak;
Greater joy I could not seek;
Well contented shall I be
Just to know and follow thee.*

His mind was at peace, his spirit calm, and never had his voice been clearer or more musical. There was a rustle of appreciation throughout the congregation.

As the choir swung into the next verse, a vagrant ray of sunshine came through a window and struck across a pew half-way down the church, throwing into sudden light the face of a fair stranger.

She was a slim, tawny girl of barely eighteen, whose generous hair was becomingly dressed beneath a stylish hat. Her features were regular and pleasing. Her lips were parted breathlessly. Her eyes—Almanzar thought there was glint of gray in them—were fixed full on him in a gaze of warm and unmistakable admiration.

Her social position was established by the fact that she was seated with one of the city's best-known Pullman families.

Unconsciously Almanzar's hand drifted to his necktie and straightened it. Unconsciously he stroked his Chillycloth coat into more satisfactory smoothness. Unconsciously he smiled—ever so slightly, as is becoming when one faces a congregation from the choir.

The second stanza came to a close; his time arrived

to repeat the refrain. Its words suddenly gained a new and fuller meaning.

Earnestly, expressively, while her eloquent eyes shone with an understanding that thrilled him to the soul, he caroled it to her and her alone.

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.

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